

# NUGÆ INDICÆ

SELECTED FROM

## ZECH. ORIEL'S NOTE BOOK

BY

PHIL. ROBINSON

AND

DEDICATED.

TO

THE CRITICS WHO BY THEIR RECEPTION OF THE FIRST EDITION  
HAVE BROUGHT THE PRESENT VOLUME UPON  
THEMSELVES

ALLAHABAD

PRINTED BY G. A. SAVIELLE, AT THE PIONEER PRESS

---

1873



## PREFATORY INDEX, AND PREFACE TO THE READER.

“*La salsa del libro.*”

MY business in life, that of a *commis voyageur*, is one that involves a great deal of travelling; in fact, I spend a large fraction of my life on the move. And my business suits me—for I like travelling. Indeed, so fond am I of it, that I am certain that if ever my soul migrates, it will be into the body of a swallow, rather than into that of a cat. A cat becomes attached to a particular place, and is no sooner put down on a spot than it takes root there. It is quite true that I too was once growing to a spot, but then I had to transplant myself, and my roots all broke off short when I pulled myself out of English soil—and they have never struck again. I am too old now to think of radical extension, even if this was a country favourable to English vegetables. Not that I am capable of much extension in any direction whatever, for I am not of an active kind, and I will lay a wager that if any one takes the trouble to examine, after my death, the interior of my skull, he will find the cerebrum very

---

inadequately convoluted, and the cerebellum a poor thing indeed—a mere embryo, the os coccygis, a very adumbration or phantasy of a brain. And since they say that subservience to the purposes of the mind is the fundamental principle on which the bodily organization has been fashioned, I require no further explanation from anyone as to the reason for my being brought into this world with one leg very much shorter than the other. My mind not being an active one requires no active helpmates in my legs; and I walk therefore as I think—lopsided. Sometimes the motion of my mind is absolutely eccentric, as is also sometimes the motion of my body, for on one occasion it pleased Providence—His ways are inscrutable—to visit me with a temporary paralysis of the deformed member, and on my way to church one beautiful summer Sunday afternoon, I made a pitiful spectacle of myself, for my wretched leg, smitten with the sudden stroke, betrayed me, and with an accelerated speed carried me at a sharp tangent across the gravel path, and, tripping up on the edge of the turf, I went helplessly into a bush, head first. The Rector was standing at the church porch, and with a kind word, or two of Christian compassion helped me up on to my feet and picked up my stick for me. His daughter had at first a smile on her face—as who could help laughing at the ridiculous sight of a lame man scudding like an unballasted boat across a path, and plunging head first into a yew bush?);—but

there were tears in her pretty eyes afterwards as she turned to go into church, leaving me sitting on the turf, and waiting till it should please God to remove His hand from me. Apprehending that some day that hand—for, have I not already said it? His ways are inscrutable—may be again laid upon me, I travel carefully and slowly.

When I write my mind keeps in step, as it were, and in character with my body; and thus it is that I deal only with safe subjects, preferring to confess myself quite ignorant of multiplication rather than discuss mathematics, and to write myself down an ass rather than by elaborate physiology to prove my humanity. My African explorations extend no further than Plate XXXIV of Mr. Keith Johnson's excellent Atlas, and if any one would wrangle with me as to the southern outlets of Tanganyika, I admit at once, and without reserve, that I have no local knowledge of the lake, no personal acquaintance therewith, and so fend off all argument as to the water-system of Central Africa. And in truth, it is strange to me why explorers go so far a-field for their discoveries. If every one would only "discover" his own neighbourhood, what an inimitable gazetteer would that be which should collate their several parochial experiences! Why, for instance, should Maundeville have gone so far out of his way as the Turcoman Country for matter whereabouts to tell lies? Islington would support a very respectable octavo of mendacity, for there are, I take it, in that parish men

quite as treacherous as those Tartarines of whom the knight says—*nihil servat quod promittunt*. Or again, why should he have gone all the way to Palestine to hunt up crows about which to tell fables? There are as good and serviceable crows at Clapham. And on this point alone would I challenge Maundeville's veracity. Crows, he says, brought olives daily to the starving monks of the monastery on Sinai. A likely story, indeed! When the Tishbite was in hiding was he fed by crows? Had Providence been so careless in the choice of messengers, Elijah, I take it, would have had short-commons.

But though I thus circumscribe the limits of my expeditions, my slow method of working is favourable to me in one way, that on the small field of my glass nothing is beneath notice because of diminutive size. I have seen so little of life that I can speak of it only in its most ordinary phases, and therefore I busy myself over square inches. But on my first arrival in India, a new world to me, I sprouted all over with green ideas. And I doubt if any one was so strangely affected by India as was I, for after landing I laughed three days almost without intermission. Since then the circumstances that moved my mirth stir only my compassion, and I have ceased to laugh at India or its people.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is a curious fact that, if I like a book very much, I find a great difficulty in getting through it. To this day I have not finished Charles Lamb nor *Paradise Lost*. Southey's

*Doctor* I gave up long ago, after having had it in reading nearly a twelve-month. Sir Thomas Browne proved a hopeless undertaking; and as for the *Anatomy of Melancholy*! The Old Testament is an exception; but then reading it from the first verse of Genesis to the last of Malachi, omitting only the genealogical Sahara of Deuteronomy and thereabouts, was something of a duty. The truth is that when I like a book I can hardly read a paragraph without going off on a thinking ramble; and I think in zigzags such a long distance, that by the time I have got by pughdundies and whimsically-winding lanes of thought home again, I find that I have forgotten where I was reading, and have to begin again. And then, as I go on, I sometimes find that while thinking, I had been unconsciously rambling along in front of my author, and continually crossing his path, so that on turning back to rejoin him I get so puzzled between his mind-steps and my own, that I have to turn over a half dozen pages all at once and start fair with him in another direction—with the same result. It is very pleasant at the time this, but apt to be bewildering afterwards, leading me very often, when writing what *I think I think*, to plagiarize from some favourite author, to whom I would willingly rather yield up my pen altogether than do an injury. As an instance of this half-guilty pilfering, an instance which is present to my memory from its strangeness, rather than as an example of the above-mentioned thought-excursions, I would record how, when once

writing of a handsome, dark-eyed woman of Rohileund, I called her in my note-book "*Jael*." She had the gentle eyes to tempt the confidence, and the soft limbs to provoke the love of a weary, war-worn Sisera. But she had, too, the bold eyes, the firm mouth, and the strong arm of a woman who could hammer a tent-peg deep into the brain of a sleeping guest. I always thought of her as *Jael*, remembered her as *Jael*. Imagine, then, my disappointment when I found that Charles Lamb, years ago, in his *Imperfect Sympathies*, said of an Eastern woman—" *Jael* had those full, dark, inscrutable eyes." I consider that Charles Lamb did me a great wrong. I had thought and written down the resemblance some years before Charles Lamb existed—for me; for I only read *Elia* very lately. But even in thus excusing myself, I stumble again into the semblance of plagiarism, for Sir Thomas Browne, defending his *Pseudodoxia* from the same charge, uses the same excuse: "In a piece of mine, published long ago, a learned annotator hath paralleled many passages with others in Montaigne's Essays, whereas, to deal clearly, when I penned that piece I had never read these leaves in that author, and scarce any more since."

So confirmed is this vice of trying to think after my author before I have read him, that when I begin to read a book I now attach to it, by a string, a piece of pencil (generally red), and when I find myself going off on an excursion, I put a spot where I stopped. In this way the



*Urn-burial* is in places red-speckled like the sunny side of a Ribstone pippin. *Kenilworth*, on the other hand, I read from the Introduction, (generally to my mind the most entertaining part of Sir Walter Scott's writings,) to the *Finis*, in five days, and I am sure no effort of Macaulay's ever occupied me much more than a week. But *Sintram* kept me a month, and to this day, I hesitate to say that I have finished the very beautiful story of DeQuincey's humiliation. There are some chapters of which I am more than uncertain. And yet I can say, with all truth, that I have read my authors, for by partial repetitions I have learnt some of them thoroughly, and have become *unius libri*,—if *unius* may be construed "two or three."

These *NUGE* were not written as a labour but as a recreation, and, to quote Quarles in his preface to his *Emblems*, "I wish my readers as much pleasure in the reading as I had in the writing."

ZECH. ORIEL.

## I.—IN AN INDIAN GARDEN.

"When God had set about creation he first planted a Garden."

*Nuge Oriolanæ.*

### 1. The Birds.

*Eucl.*—But of what sort, pray, is this life among the birds? for you know it accurately.

*Hoopoe.*—Not an unpleasant one to pass; where in the first place, we must live without a purse.

*Eucl.*—You have removed much of life's base metal.

*Hoopoe.*—And we feed in Gardens upon the white sesame and myrtle-berries and poppies and mint.

*Aristophanes (Hickie's.)*

## 2. Of Hens.

3. *Corvus Splendens*.

"Crows," remarked the Ettrick Shepherd, "are down in the Devil's book in round-hand."

*Noctes Ambrosianæ.*

## 4. Green Parrots.

"The writer of the Mahabharata excluded green parrots from an ideal country.

"There are," he writes, "no parrots there to eat the grain."

*Nugæ Oriëntales.*

## 5. The Mynas.

## 6. The Seven Sisters.

"One for each of the wise men of Greece, one for each hill of Rome, each of the *divitis ostia Nili* and each hero of Thebes, one for each day of the week, one for each of the Ploïades, one for each cardinal sin."

*Nugæ Oriëntales.*

## 7. The Mongoose.

## 8. The Grey-Squirrel.

"The squirrel Adjidauno,

"In and out among the branches,

"Coughed and chattered in the oak-tree,

"Laughed and said between his laughing,

"Do not shoot me Hiawatha."

*Longfellow.*

## 9. The Ants.

## 10. The Mallie and his Mate.

"Oft loitering lazily, if not o'erseen,

"Or misapplying his unskilful strength,

\* \* \* No works indeed

"That ask robust tough sinews bred to toil,

"Servile employ : but such as may amuse not tire."

*The Task.*

## 11. The Pariah Dog and Cat.

"As all criminals are countrymen, so all pariah dogs are brothers. That the old Egyptians should have venerated the dog I can understand, but to hold THE CAT sacred! If the priests of Nephthys want a few cat-mummies I will furnish their temples for them."

*Nugæ Orielanæ.*

## 12. The Pea-boy.

"A thing of dark imaginings."

*Lara.*

## 13. The Fruits.

"Fruit of all kinds, in coat

"Rough or smooth, rind, a bearded husk, or shell."

*Paradise Lost.*

## 14. The Bheesty's Mother.

"I beheld where the Ancient of Days did sit, whose hair on his head was like the pure wool."

*Daniel.*

"A withered old beldam, too poor to keep a cat, hunkling on her hunkers over a feeble fire of sticks."

*Christopher North.*

## II.—THE INDIAN SEASONS.

## 1. Sub Jove Fervido.

"A great length of deadly days."

*Atalanta in Calydon.*

## 2. Sub Jove Pluvio.

"Forth fly the tepid airs and unconfined,

"Unbinding earth, the moving softness strays ;

"Joyous, the impatient husbandman perceives

"Relenting nature, and his lusty steers

"Drives from the stalls to where the well-used plough

"Lies in the furrow."

*Thomson's Seasons.*

## 3. Sub Jove Benigno.

### III.—AMONG THE CROPS.

#### 1. Among the Crops.

—"and the grace of standing corn."

*Morris.*

#### 2. The Sparrow.

"The Sparrow," said Luther, "is a most voracious animal, and does great harm to the crops. The Hebrews call it 'tschirp' and it should be killed wherever found."

*Colloquia Mensalia.*

#### 3. The Wolf.

"Of the heraldic bearings of the Tribes of Israel nearly all are common-place and plainly 'aperte' in their significations. Thus, the ox of Joseph and of Ephraim, the young lion of Judah and the eagle of Dan. But two are peculiarly suggestive, the triple wave on the shield of Reuben 'unstable as water,' and Benjamin's wolf couched in the field of green corn."

*Nuga Orientalis.*

#### 4. The Jackals.

"Scenes formed for contemplation and to nurse

"The growing seeds of wisdom

\* \* \* \*

"Scenes such as these 'tis his supreme delight

"To fill with riot."

*The Tusk.*

#### 5. Sudhoo.

#### 6. Buggoo, the Chowkiedar.

"His life is a watch or a vision,

"Between a sleep and a sleep."

*Atalanta in Calydon.*

#### 7. The Gnome of the Hillock.

"He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath ;

"His flaming robes streamed out beyond his heels,

"And gave a roar."

*Hyperion.*

## IV.—MISCELLANEOUS.

## 1. The Faqueer.

"In his eyes the foreknowledge of death."

*Swinburne.*

## 2. A Native Garden.

## 3. The Syce's Children.

"The Italians make little difference between children and nephews or near kinsfolk : but so they be of the same lump they care not."

*Bacon's Essays.*

## 4. The Hari-Kiri.

"There is much to be learnt by us from old Japan. In that country it was once a point of honour among high officials to kill themselves if anything went wrong in their respective departments."

*Nugæ Orielandæ.*

## 5. The Frogs.

"The croaking of frogs," said Luther, "edifies nothing at all. It is mere sophistry and fruitless."

*Colloquia Mensalia.*

## 6. Of Tailors.

## 7. Gamins.

"They are not dirty by chance—or accident—say twice or thrice per diem, but they are always dirty."

*Christopher North.*

## 8. National Smells.

"That Jews stink naturally, that is, that in the race and nation there is an evil savour, is a received opinion we know not how to admit, although we concede many questionable points and dispute not the verity of sundry opinions which are of affinity thereto."

*Sir Thos. Browne's Pseudodoxia.*

## 9. The Native Constable.

## 10. Mosquitoes.

"With drowsy song

"The grey-fly wound his sullen horn along."

*Childhood (Kirke White.)*

"The grey-fly winds her sultry horn."

*Lycidas (Milton.)*

11. From the Raw to the Rotten.

12. Iste Puer.

“ Let him mature : you cannot ripen fruit by beating it.”

*Telugu Proverb.*

13. From Allahabad to Nynee Tal.

14. Death, the Daughter of Mercy.

“ I have so abject a conceit of this common way of existence, this retaining to the sun and elements, that I cannot think this is to be a man or to live according to the dignity of humanity \* \* \* I honour any man that contemns death, nor can I love highly any that is afraid of it : this makes me naturally love a soldier and honour those tattered and contemptible regiments that will die at the word of a sergeant.”

*Religio Medici.*

15. Railway Travelling.



# ZECH ORIEL'S NOTES.

---

## IN AN INDIAN GARDEN.

---



N INDIAN GARDEN is to the natural world beyond its walls very much what D'Israeli's *Curiosities* is to the rest of literature. Shrubs and flowers, indigenous, or of distant derivation, jumbled together, attract an equally miscellaneous congregation of birds and insects, and by their fresher leaves, brighter blossoms, or juicier fruit, detain for a time the capricious and fastidious visitors. Even an Indian Garden is Nature's museum—a gallery of curiosities for the indifferent to admire, the interested to study. It is a Traveller's Club, an Œcumenical Council, a Parliament of buzzing, humming, chirping, and chattering things. The earth beneath, the trees between, and the air above, are full of busy life for all who have eyes to see, ears to hear, or the will to learn of the curious humanity of beasts and birds and little insects. The great unclouded

sky is terraced out by flights of birds. Here, in the region of trees, church-spires, and house-tops, flutter and have their being the myriad tribes who plunder while they share the abodes of men; the diverse crew who jostle on the earth, the lowest level of creation, with mammals, and walk upon its surface plantigrade; the small birds whose names children learn, whom school-boys snare, and who fill the shelves of museums as the Insessores, or birds that perch. They are the commonalty of bird-dom, who furnish forth the mobs which bewilder the drunken-flighted jay when he jerks, shrieking in a series of blue hyphen-flashes through the air, or which, when some owlet as unfortunate as foolish has let itself be jostled from its cosy hole beneath the thatch out into the glare of daylight, crowd round the blinking stranger and unkindly jeer it from amongst them. These are the ground-floor tenants, our every-day-walk acquaintances, who look up to crows as to Members of Council, and think no mean thing of green parrots. And yet there are among them many of a notable plumage and song, more indeed than among the upper ten of Volucres, just as, if the Indian proverb goes for aught, there are more pretty women among the lowest, the mehter, than any other caste. On the second floor, where nothing but clear ether checks their flight, swim the great eagles, the knightly falcons and the vultures, grand when on their wide loose pinions they float and circle—sordid only, like the gods of old, when they stoop to earth. These divide the peerage of the skies,



and among them is universal a fine purity of colour and form—a nobility of power. They are all princes among the feathered, gentle and graceful as they wheel and re-curve undisturbed in their own high domains, but fierce in battle and terribly swift when they shoot down to earth, their keen vision covering half a province, their cruel cry shrilling to the floors of heaven. See them now, with no quarry to pursue, no battle to fight, and mark the exceeding beauty of their motion. In tiers above each other, the Bohemian kites, their sharp cut wings bent into a bow, their tail, a third wing almost, spread out fanwise to the wind—the vultures parallel, but wheeling in higher spheres on level wings—the hawk, with his strong bold flight, smiting his way up to the highest place; while far above him, where the sky-roof is cobwebbed with white clouds, float dim specks, which in the distance seem hardly moving—the sovereign eagles. But though they can stare the sun without blinking, we cannot; so let us turn our eyes lower—to the garden level. Pleasant indeed are our Indian Gardens. Here in a green colonnade stand the mysterious broad-leaved plants with their strange spikes of fruit—there the dark mango. Notice yon spare-leaved peepul, that sacred yet treacherous tree that drags down the temple which it was placed to sanctify; the shapely tamarind with its clouds of foliage; the graceful neem; the patulous teak, with its great leathern leaves, and the glossy jack. Below them grow a wealth of roses, the lavender-blossomed

durantas, the cactus grotesque in growth, the poyntzettia with its stars of scarlet, the spiky aloes, the sick-scented jessamine, and the quaint coral trees ; while over all shoots up the palm. The citron, lime, and orange trees are beautiful alike when they load the air with the perfume of their waxen flowers, or when they droop their heavy branches to rest their yellow treasure on the ground.

And pleasant is it to see the garden's visitors. The crow pheasant stalks past with his chesnut wings drooping by his side, the magpie with his curious note climbs the tree overhead, the woodpeckers flutter the creviced ants, the sprightly bulbul tunes his throat with crest erect, the glistering flower-pecker haunts the lilies, the oriole flashes in the splendour of his golden plumage from tree to tree, the bee-eater slides through the air, the doves call to each other from the shady guava grove, the poultry——Poultry ? Yes, they do not, it is true, strictly appertain to gardens, but rather to hen-houses and stable-yards, the outskirts of populous places and remote corners of cultivated fields. Yet they are—and that not seldom—to be found and met with in gardens where, if ill-conditioned, they do not scruple to commit an infinity of damage by looking inquisitively, albeit without judgment, after food, at the roots of plants, and by making for themselves comfortable hollows in the conspicuous corners of flower-beds, wherein they may, with notable assiduity, ruffle their feathers during the early hours of sunshine. These pastimes are not, however, without some hazard to the hens, for thereby

---

they render themselves both obnoxious to mankind and noticeable by their other enemies. A cat who has two minds about attacking a fowl when in a decent posture and enjoying herself as a hen should do, does not hesitate to assault her when met with in a dust-hole, her feathers all set the wrong way and in an ecstasy of titillation. A kite will swoop from the blue to see what manner of eatable she may be, nor when she is laying bare the roots of a rose-bush is the gardener reluctant to stone her, whereby the hen is caused some personal inconvenience and much mental perturbation, determining her to escape (always, let it be noticed, in the wrong direction) with the greatest possible precipitancy. These same hens are, we think, the most foolish of fowls—for on this point the popular proverb that makes a goose to be a fool is in error, as the goose is in reality one of the most cunning of birds, even in a domestic state, while in a wild state there are few birds to compare with them for vigilance. Let sportsmen bear me witness. The hen, however, is an extraordinary fool, and in no circumstance of life does she behave with a seemly composure. Should a large bird pass overhead, she immediately concludes that it is about to fall upon her head ; while if she hears any sound for which she cannot satisfactorily account to herself, she sets up a woful clucking, in which, after a few rounds, she is certain to be joined by her comrades, who have not even the excuse of having heard the original noise. But their troubles are many.

## II.

*Corvus Splendens* is the scientific name given by Vieillot to that "treble dated bird," the common crow of India, and although Hodgson yearned to change it to "shameless" (*impudicus*), and although Jerdon still declares that *splendens* is inappropriate, and tends to bring scientific nomenclature into ridicule, that bird—as was only to be expected from a crow—has kept its mendacious adjective, and in spite of Hodgson and Jerdon is still, in name, as fine a bird in India as it was time out of mind in Olympus. *Splendens* or not at present, the crow must have had recommendations either of mind or person to have been chosen, as Ovid tells us it was, as the messenger-bird of so artistic a deity as Apollo. But the crow lost Paradise—and good looks with it—not for one impulsive act, but for a fortnight's hard sinning. Instead of going home as straight as Helen complains Menelaus used to do, it sat down and waited for some figs to get ripe, and then, when it did go home, it rounded off its trespasses with an untruth for which we rejoice to know the crow got punished. Now punishment has a hardening influence on some people, and it has had a most dreadful effect on the corvine disposition. Heedless of all moral obligations, gluttonous, and a perverter of truth, Ovid tells us it was, even in its best days; but now it has developed into a whole legion of devilry. Lest a Baboo should trip me up, throwing Menu in my teeth and quoting from the great lawgiver "a good wife should be like a crow," I would give it as my opinion

that Menu, when he said this, referred to that doubtful virtue of the crow that forbids any exhibition of conjugal tenderness before the public eye—an unnatural instinct and reserve to my thinking. Crows cannot be called “innocent blacknesses,” for their nigritude is the livery of sin, the badge of crime, like the scarlet V on the shoulder of the convict *voleur*, the dark brand on Cain’s brow, the snow-white leprosy of Gehazi, or the yellow garb of Norfolk Islanders. And yet they do not wear their colour with humility or even common decency. They swagger in it, pretending they chose that exact shade for themselves. Did they not do this, perhaps Jerdon would not have begrudged them their flattering name, nor Hodgson have called them “*impudicos*,” but by their out-Heroding villany and their brazen effrontery they have raised every man’s hand against them ; and, were they anything but crows, they must have had to take, like Ishmael the son of Hagar, to the desert. Perhaps it is that they presume upon their past honours. If so, they should beware. Ccle’s dog was too proud to move out of the way of a cart of manure, and Southey has told us his fate. Again, their Græek and Latin glories have had a serious counterpoise in the writings of modern ancients, where the nature of crows is proven as swart as their Ethiop faces. Is it not written in the Singhalese Pratyasataka that nothing can improve a crow ? Students of Burton will remember that in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* devils

(including sprites and such like devilkins) are divided into nine classes; for though Bodine declared that all devils must of necessity be spherical in shape, perfect rounds, his theory was quashed by Zaminchus, who proved that they assume divers forms, "sometimes those of cats and crows." Zaminchus was doubtless right, and no one can feel compunction in slaughtering these shreds of Satan, these unburnt cinders from Tartarus. Zaminchus superfluously adds that in these forms they are "more knowing than any human being" (*quovis homine scientior*), and another old writer just as needlessly tells us that these "terrestrial devils" are in the habit of "flapping down platters" and "making strange noises." It is, therefore, literally correct to say "that devil of a crow," for, as Zaminchus has shown, crows are devils. Some, however, may urge that because some crows are devils, it does not follow that all are. This is plausible, but unworthy of the subject, which should be studied in a liberal spirit and without hair-splitting. When King John killed Jews, he didn't first finically investigate if they were usurers—he knew they were Jews, and that was enough. Besides, did any one ever see a crow that was not "*quovis homine scientior*!" If he did, he proved it by putting it to death, and, as dead crows count for nothing, that individual bird cannot be cited as a case in point. Further, do not all crows "flap down platters" (when they get the chance) and "make strange noises?" Are not these unequivocal signs of bedevilment?

Do not Zaminchus, Bustius, and Cardan agree on this point? Does not the old Chinese historian lay it down that in the South of Sweden is situate "the land of crows and demons?" Is there not in Norway a fearful hill called Huklebrig, whither and whence fiery chariots are commonly seen by the country people carrying to and fro the souls of bad men in the likeness of crows? Crows, then, are indubitably the connecting link between devils class 3, "inventors of all mischief," Prince Belial at their head,—and class 4, "malicious devils," under Prince Asmodeus. An inkling of their fallen state seems to be floating in the cerebra of crows, for they sin naturally and never beg pardon. Did any one ever see a contrite *corvus*—a repentant crow? When taken *flagrante delicto*, does this nobody's child provoke commiseration by craven and abject postures, deprecating anger by looks of penitence? Quite the contrary. These birds, if put to it, would deny that they stole Cicero's pillow when he was dying, or that they sate, the abomination of desolation, where they ought not—profaning the Teraphim of John de Montfort, insulting his household gods and desecrating his Penates, while in the next room that great soldier and statesman was receiving the last consolations of Extreme Unction? Yet it is known they did. Petruchio thought it hard to be braved in his own house by a tailor—how keenly he would have felt the familiarity of Indian crows! In the verandahs they parade the reverend sable which they

disgrace ; they walk in the odour of sanctity through open doors, sleek as Chadband, wily as Pecksniff. Their step is grave, and they ever seem on the point of quoting Scripture, while their eyes are wandering on carnal matters. Like Stiggins, they keep a sharp look-out for tea-time. They hanker after flesh-pots. They are as chary of their persons as the bamboo of its blossom, and distant to strangers. In England they pretend to be rooks (except during rook-shooting), but in India they stand upon their own infamous individuality—for there are no rooks.

### III.

CERVANTES has recorded the fact that Theophrastus complained "of the long life given to crows." Now the argument of this complaint is not so superficial as at first it seems, and really contains internal evidence of a knowledge of bird-nature. Theophrastus, I take it, grumbled not simply because crows, being naturally vicious, would in a long life get through more mischief than in a short one, but because, if Atropos were only more impartially nimble with her shears, crows would never be able to get through any mischief at all. And in this lies a great point of difference between the sombre crow and the dædal parrot. The crow requires much time to develop and perfect his misdemeanours ; the parrot brings his mischiefs to market in the green leaf. The first is a crafty



villain ; the latter a headlong blackguard. While a crow will spend a week with a view to the ultimate abstraction of a door key, a parrot will have scrambled and screeched in a day through the whole cycle of sin, and before the crow has finished reconnoitring the gardener the parrot has stripped the guava-tree. From these differences in the characters of the birds I hold that Theophrastus chose "crows" advisedly and made his complaint with judgment ; but I wonder that, having thus headed a list of grievances, he did not continue it with a protest against the green colour given to parrots. The probable explanation of the oversight is, that he never saw a Green Parrot. But we who *do* see them have surely a reasonable cause for complaint, when nature creates thieves and then gives them a passport to impunity. For the green parrot has a large brain (some naturalists would like to see the Psittacid family on this account rank first among birds) and he knows that he is green as well as we do, and knowing it he makes the most of nature's injudicious gift. He settles with a screech among your mangoes, and as you approach, the phud ! phud ! of the falling fruitlings assures you that he is not gone. But where is he ? Somewhere in the tree you may be sure, probably with an unripe fruit in his claw which is raised half way to his beak, but certainly with a round black eye fixed on you, for, while you are straining to distinguish green feathers from green leaves, he breaks with a sudden rush

through the foliage a yard above your head, and is off in an apotheosis of screech to his watch-tower on a distant tree. To give the parrot his due, however, we must remember that he did not choose his own colour,—it was thrust upon him; and we must further allow that, snob as he is, he possesses certain manly virtues. He is wanting in neither personal courage, assurance, nor promptitude, but he abuses these virtues by using them in the service of vice. Moreover, he is a glutton, and, unlike his neighbours, the needle of his thoughts and endeavours always points towards his stomach. The starlings, bigots to a claim which they have forged to the exclusive ownership of the croquet ground, divide their attention for a moment between worms and intruders. Here a kite forbears to flutter the curry-fowls while he squeals his love-song to his mate, there a hawk is affording healthy excitement to a score of crows who keck at him as he flaps unconcerned on his wide ragged wings through the air. “Opeechee the robin” has found a bird smaller than himself, and is accordingly pursuing it relentlessly through bush and brier; the thinly-feathered babblers are telling each other the secret of a mungoose being at that moment in the water-pipe; while the squirrels, sticking head downwards to their respective branches, are having a twopenny-halfpenny argument across the garden path. Meanwhile the green parrots are gorging fruit. Like the Ettrick Shepherd they never can

eat a few of anything, and their luncheons are all heavy dinners. "That frugal bit of the old Britons of the bigness of a bean," which could satisfy the hunger and thirst of our ancestors for a whole day, would not suffice the green parrot for one meal, for not only is his appetite inordinate, but his wastefulness also, and what he cannot eat he destroys. He enters a tree of fruit as the Visigoths entered a building. His motto is, "what I cannot take I will not leave," and he pillages the branches, gutting them of even their unripest fruit. Dr. Jerdon, in his *Birds of India*, records the fact that "owls attack these birds by night," and there is, ill-feeling apart, certainly something very comfortable in the knowledge, that while we are warm abed owls are most probably garrotting the green parrots.

---

#### IV.

I HAVE spoken elsewhere, with some inadvertence, of "the Republic of Birds," although by my own showing—for I write of "sovereign" eagles and the "knightly" falcons—the constitution of the volucrine world is an unlimited monarchy, of which the despotism is only tempered by the strong social bonds that lend strength to the lower orders of birds. The tyrant kite is powerless before the corvine Vehmgericht; and it is with hesitation that the hawk offers violence to a sparrows' Club. But there are undoubtedly among the feathered some to whom a Republic would present itself

as the most perfect form of government, and to none more certainly than the Mynas.\* The Myna is, although a moderate, a very decided republican, for sober in mind as in apparel, he sets his face against such vain frivolities as the tumbling of pigeons, the meretricious dancing of peafowl, and the gaudy bedizenment of the minivets, holding that "life is real, life is earnest," and, while worms are to be found beneath the grass to be spent in serious work. To quote "ane aunciente clerke," he "obtests against the chaunting of foolish litanies before the idols of one's own conceit," would "chase away all bewildering humours and fancies"; and would say with the clerke "that, though the cautelous tregœtour, or, as the men of France do call him, the jongleur, doth make a very pretty play with two or three balls which seem to live in the air, and which do not depart from him, yet I would rather, after our old English fashion, have the ball tossed from hand to hand, or that one should propulse the ball against the little guichet while another should repel it with the batting staff. This I hold to be the fuller exercise." The myna therefore views with some displeasure the dilettante hawking of bee-eaters and the leisurely deportment of the crow-pheasant, cannot be brought to see the utility of the luxurious hoopoe's crest, and loses all patience with the köel-cuckoo for his idle habit of spending his forenoons in tuning his voice. For the patient kingfisher he entertains a moderate respect,

---

\* *Sturninae*.—The Starlings.

and he holds in esteem the industrious woodpecker ; but the scapegrace parrot is an abomination to him, and, had he the power, the myna would altogether exterminate the race of humming birds for their persistent trifling over lilies. Life with him is all work, and he makes it, as Souvestre says, "a legal process." Of course he has a wife, and she celebrates each anniversary of spring by presenting him with a nestful of young mynas, but her company rather subdues and sobers him than makes him frivolous or giddy, for as the myna is, his wife is—of one complexion of feather and mind. A pair of mynas (for these discreet birds are seldom seen except in pairs) remind one of a Dutch burgher and his frau. They are comfortably dressed, well fed, of a grave deportment, and so respectable that scandal hesitates to whisper their name. In the empty babble of the Seven Sisters, the fruitless controversies of finches, the bickerings of amatory sparrows (every sparrow is at heart a rake), or the turmoil of kites they take no part,—holding aloof alike from the monarchical exclusiveness of the jealous *Raptores* and the democrat-communism of crows, between the two offering a solid opposition to, on the one hand, despotism, on the other anarchy, and testifying, by their staid demeanour, to the ever present sense of self-respecting responsibility which they have taken upon themselves. The olive tree, it is said, will not grow near the oak : it hates it. And between the grape of story and the cabbage there is a like antipathy. So with the myna : it shrinks from the neighbour-

hood of the strong, and resents the companionship of the humble. But among vegetables, if there is antipathy there is also sympathy ; for does not the Latin poet say that the elm loves the vine, and the legend-ballad of the Todas tell us how the cachew-apple droops when the cinnamon dies ? But among the mynas there is no such waste of tenderness, and over the annihilation of the whole world of birds they would be even such " pebble stones" as Launce's dog. At the same time they are not intrusive with their likes and dislikes. If the squirrel chooses to chirrup all day, they let him do so, and they offer no opposition to the ostentatious combats of robins. Nor do they trespass on their neighbours with idle curiosity. That butterflies should mysteriously migrate in great clouds, moving against the wind across wide waters, and even tempt the ocean itself with nothing more definite than the horizon before them as a resting place, may set the inquisitive crow thinking, or furnish Humboldt with matter for long conjecturing ; but the mynas would express no surprise at the phenomenon. They waste no time, wondering with others why the wag-tail so continuously wags its tail, nor would they vex the Syrian coney with idle questions as to its preference for rocky places. Such things have set others a-thinking and would make the leaf-loving squirrel silly with surprise ; but the Essene myna !—" Let the world slide," he says ; " we are here to work, and in the name of the Prophet—worms." He comes of a race of poor antece-

dents, and has no lineage worth boasting of. The crow has Greek-and-Latin memories, and for the antiquity of the sparrow we have the testimony of Holy Writ. It is true that in the stories of India the myna has frequent and honorable mention ; but the authors speak of the hill bird—a notable fowl with strange powers of mimicry, and always a favourite with the people—and not the homely Quaker bird, who so diligently searches our grass plots, and may be seen, from dawn to twilight, busy at his appointed work—the consumption of little grubs. The lust of the green parrot for orchard-brigandage, or of the proud-stomached king-crow for battle with his kind, are as whimsical caprices, fancies of the moment, when compared to the steady assiduity with which this Puritan bird pursues the object of his creation. And the result is that the myna is no wit. Like the German, he is incomparable at hard unshowy work, but they, as one, a wit himself, has said of them, are “only moderately mirthful in their humour.” Intelligence is his of a high order, for, busy as he may be, the myna descries before all others the far-away speck in the sky which will grow into a hawk, and it is from the myna’s cry of alarm that the garden becomes first aware of the danger that is approaching. But wit he has none. His only way of catching a worm is to lay hold of its tail and pull it out of its hole—generally breaking it in the middle, and losing the bigger half. He does not tap the ground as the wryneck will tap the tree to stimulate the insect to run out to be eaten entire ; nor like the stork

imitate a dead thing, till the frog, tired of waiting for him to move, puts his head above the green pond. "To strange mysterious dulness still the friend" he parades the croquet lawn, joins in grave converse with another by the roadside, or sits to exchange advice with a strange acquaintance on a rail. At night the mynas socially congregate together ; and with a clamour quite unbecoming their character, make their arrangements for the night, contending for an absolute equality even in sleep. Has it ever struck you how fortunate it is for the world of birds that of the twenty-four hours some are passed in darkness ? And yet without the protection of night the earth would be assuredly depopulated of small birds, and the despots, whom the mynas detest, would be left alone to contest in internecine conflict the dominion of the air.

~~~~~  
V.

As busy as the mynas but less silent in their working are those sad-coloured birds hopping about in the dust and incessantly talking while they hop. They are the Seven Sisters, and most probably are trying to settle some little difference, but if they gabble till the coming of the Coqigrues they will never settle it. Fighting ? Not at all ; do not be misled by the tone of voice. That heptachord clamour is not the expression of any Vatinian hate,—it is only a way they have. They always exchange their commonplaces as if their next neighbour was out of hearing. If they would only be



---

quiet they would pass for bankers at least, they look so very respectable ; but, though they dress as soberly as Quakers their behaviour is unseemly as that of Herodotus' Prince who disappointed the expectations of his friends by dancing head downwards on a table "gesticulating with his legs." If Coleridge's wise-looking friend had preserved his silence through the whole meal, the poet would have remembered him as one of the most intelligent men of his acquaintance ; but the apple dumplings making him speak burst the bubble of his reputation. His speech bewrayed him, like the Shibboleth at the ford of Jordan, the "bread and cheese" of the Fleming persecution, or the Gallilean twang of the impetuous saint. Pythagoreans will have no difficulty in believing that these birds are the original masons and hodmen of Babel, though some might contend with plausibility that in a former state they were elderly ladies, unmarried, and addicted to peppermint. "Ten measures of garrulity," says the Talmud, "came down from heaven, and the women took nine of them." If so, the Seven Sisters got the other ; and judging from woman's allowed unskilfulness in weights and measures, and from the astuteness of these word bags, we may fairly presume that they appropriated a full one, pressed down and perpetually running over. The Seven Sisters pretend to feed on insects, but that is only when they cannot get peas. Look at them now ! The whole family, a septemvirate of sin, among your Marrowfat peas gobbling and gabbling as if they believed in Dr. Cumming.

And it is of no use to expel them—for they will return. When it is night they will go off with a great deal of preliminary talk to their respective boarding-houses, for these birds, though at times quarrelsome as Sumatrans during the pepper harvest, are sociable and lodge together. The weak point of this arrangement is that often a bird—perhaps the middle one of a long row of closely-packed snoozers—has a bad dream, or loses his balance, and instantly the shock flashes along the line. The whole dormitory is at once ablaze with indignation, and a great deal of bad language is bandied about promiscuously in the dark; and often when the abusive shower is slackening, and querulous monosyllables and indistinct animal noises have taken the place of the septemfluous (Fuller has sanctified the word) vituperation, an individual, suddenly exasperate at the unseemly din and deprecating further disturbance, lifts up his voice in remonstrance, and by so doing rekindles the smouldering fire. Sometimes he suddenly breaks off—suggesting to a listener the idea that his next neighbour had silently kicked him—but oftener the mischief is irreparable, and the din runs its course, again dwindles away, and is again relit, perhaps more than once before all heads are safely under wing.

---

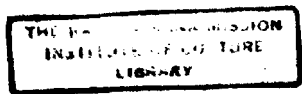
## VI.

As a contrast to the fidgetty birds, glance your eye along the garden path and take note of that pink-nosed

mongoose\* gazing placidly out of the water-pipe. It looks as shy as Oliver Twist before the Board; but that is only because it sees no chance of being able to chase you about, catch you and eat you. If you were a snake or a lizard you would find it provokingly familiar, and as brisk as King Ferdinand at an *auto-da-fé*; for the scent of a lively snake is to the mongoose as pleasant as that of valerian to cats, attar to a Begum, aniseed to pigeons, soup to an alderman, or the smell of burning Jews to His Most Catholic Majesty aforementioned; and when upon the war-trail the mongoose is as different to the every-day animal as in England the Sunday gentleman in the Park in green gloves and a blue neck-tie is to the obsequious young man who served you across the counter on Saturday. Usually, the mongoose is to be seen slinking timorously along the narrow water-courses, or under cover of the turf edge, gliding along to some hunting ground among the aloes, whence if it unearths a quarry it will emerge with its fur on end and its tail like a bottle-brush, its eyes dancing in its head, and all its body agog with excitement,—reckless of the dead leaves crackling as it scuttles after the flying reptile,—flinging itself upon the victim with a zest and single-mindedness wonderful to see. That pipe is its city of refuge—the asylum in all times of trouble, to which it betakes itself when annoyed by the cat who lives in the carrot-bed, or the bird-boy

The Ichneumon; *Viverrinae*.

11,267



who by his inhuman cries greatly perplexes the robins in the peas, or when its nerves have been shaken by the sudden approach of the silent-footed gardener or by a *rencontre* with the long-tailed pariah-dog that lives in the outer dust. The mongoose, although his own brothers in Nepal have the same smell in a worse degree, is the sworn foe of musk-rats. "All is not mongoose that smells of musk," it reasons as it enjoys a quiet chase after a chitt-chittering victim; but although it enjoys this "le sport," it sometimes essays the less creditable battue. Jerdon says—"It is very destructive to such birds as frequent the ground. Not unfrequently it gets access to tame pigeons, rabbits, or poultry, and commits great havoc, sucking the blood only of several." He adds that he has "often seen it make a dash into a verandah where caged birds were placed and endeavour to tear them from their cages." The mongoose family, in fact, do duty for weasels, and if game was preserved in this country, would be vermin. Even at present some of the blame so lavishly showered on the tainted musk-rat might be transferred to the mongoose. A little more of that same blame might perhaps be made over to another popular favourite, the grey squirrel.

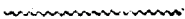
---

## VII.

THE Palm Squirrel as it is more properly called, will come into a room and eat the fruit on your sideboard, or into a

vinery and incontinently borrow your grapes. A rat-trap in such cases may do some good, but a complete cure is hopeless. Nothing but the Armenian doctrine of universal grace will save the squirrel from eternal damnation, for its presumption is unique. The plummet of reflection cannot sound it, nor the net of memory bring up a precedent. It is gratuitous, unprovoked, and aimless. It is all for love. There are no stakes such as the crow plays for, and in its shrill gamut there is no string of menace or of challenge. Its scrannel quips are pointless—so let them pass. Any one, unless he be a Scotch piper, has a right to stone a Babbler for its fulsome clatter; but the tongue of the squirrel is free as air. There is no embargo on it—it is out of bond, and wags when and where it lists. Let the craven kite (itself the butt of smaller birds) swoop at it, but give your sympathy to the squirrel. A woman who cannot kiss, and a bird which cannot sing, ought to be at any rate taught; but who would look for harmony from a squirrel? Was wisdom found in Gotham? Is there truth in the compliments of beggars? Would you hook Leviathan by the nose, or hedge a cuckoo in? Again, besides its voice, people have been found to object to its tail. Hiawatha liked it. There is no malice in the motion of a squirrel's tail. It resembles not the cocked-up gesture of the robin, or the English wren. It doesn't swing like the cat's, or dart like the scorpion's. It is never offensively straight on end like a cow's on a windy day, nor slinking like a pariah-dog's. It has none of the odious

mobility of the monkey's, nor the three-inch arrogance of the goat's. Neither is there in it the pendulous monotony of the wag-tail's, nor the spasmodic wriggle of the sucking lamb's. Yet it is a speaking feature. That fluffy perkiness is an index of the squirrel mind. With an upward jerk it puts a question, with a downward one emphasizes an assertion, gives plausibility with a wave, and stings with sarcasm in a series of disconnected lilts—for the squirrel is as inquisitive as Empedocles, as tediously emphatic as the Ephesians, and in self-confidence a Croesus. It would not have hesitated to suggest to Solomon solutions to the Queen of Sheba's conundrums, nor to volunteer likely answers to the riddle of the Sphinx. It is impervious to jibes. Scoffs and derision are thrown away upon it as much as solid argument. Hard names do it no hurt—it would not be visibly affected if you called it a parallelo-piped, or the larva of a marine Ascidian. Perhaps it is a philosopher, for, since squirrels dropped their nutshells on Primeval Man, no instance is on record of a melancholy squirrel. Its emotions (precipitate terror excepted) are shallow, and though it may be tamed, will form no strong attachments; while its worldly wisdom is great. Like the frog in *Æsop* it is "extreme wise." Given a three-inch post, the squirrel can always keep out of sight. You may go round and round, but it will still be "on the other side."



## VIII.

SQUIRRELS excepted, the most prominent members of Indian Garden life are ants, for they stamp their broad-arrow everywhere; their advertisements may be read on almost every tree trunk, and samplers of their work seen on almost every path. They have a head office in most verandahs, with branch establishments in the bath-rooms, while their agents and travellers are ubiquitous, laying earth-heaps wherever they travel—each heap the outward and visible sign of much inward tunnelling, and which, towards the end of the rainy season, will fall in. Engineering seems to be their favourite profession although some have a passion for plastering, and when other surfaces fail will lay a coat of mud on the level ground, for the after-pleasure of creeping under it. Others are bigots to geographical discovery, and, like so many Hiouen Thsangs or Livingstones, wander into dangerous places, whence they escape only by a series of miracles. Of some a pastoral life is all the joy, for they keep herds of green aphides—better known as “blight”—which they milk regularly for the sake of the sweet leaf-juice they secrete. Others, again, are hunters living on the produce of the chase, and issue forth a host of Lilliputians to drag home a Brobdignag cricket, or *en masse* to plunder the larders of their neighbours. The bulk, however, are omnivorous and jacks of all trades, with a decided leaning towards vegetable food

and excavation; and it is in this, the enormous consumption of seeds in the ant nurseries, that this family contributes its quota to the well-being of creation, a quota which after all scarcely raises it, in point of usefulness, to the level of butterflies and moths—popularly supposed to be the idlest and least useful of created insects. It ought, however, to be kept in mind that butterflies are only beatified caterpillars, and when we see them flying about, should remember that their work is over and they are enjoying their vacation. They have been raised to the Upper House, and from being laborious artizans they have become the sleeping partners in a thriving business. While they were caterpillars they worked hard and well, so Nature, to reward them, dresses them up to look attractive, and sends them out as butterflies to get married—if they can. The ants, on the other hand, did no work when they were grubs, so they have to do a good deal in their old age; they have to provide food for successive broods of hungry youngsters, who, when grown up, will join them in feeding their younger brothers and sisters, or, if they are of the favoured few, will enter ant-life with wings and be blown away a few hundred yards to become the founders of new colonies. The actual balance of work done by caterpillars and ants, respectively, is indeed about equal; the only difference being, that caterpillars check vegetation by feeding themselves, and ants by feeding their babies, while the balance of mischief done is very



much against the ants. The commonest of all are the black villains, to be found marauding on every side-board, and whose normal state seems to be one of criminal trespass. These from their size are perhaps also the most interesting, as it requires little exertion to distinguish between the classes of individuals that in the aggregate make up "a nest of ants." There is the black-guard soldier or policeman ant, who goes about wagging his great head and snapping his jaws at nothing, furious exceedingly when insulted, but as a rule preferring to patrol in shady neighbourhoods, where he can peer idly into cracks and holes. See him as he saunters up the path, pretending to be on the look-out for suspicious characters, stopping strangers with impertinent inquiries, leering at that modest wire-worm who is hurrying home. Watch him swaggering to meet a friend whose beat ends at the corner, and with whom he will loiter for the next hour. Suddenly a blossom falls from the orange tree overhead. His display of energy is now terrific. He dashes about in all directions to the great annoyance of the foot-passengers, continually loses his own balance, and has to scramble out of worm-holes and dusty crevices; or he comes in collision with a blade of grass which he turns upon and utterly discomfits, and then on a sudden, tail up, he whirls home to report on the recent violent volcanic disturbances, but which, being at his post, he was fortunately able to suppress! Another and more numerous section of the

community of ants are the loafers, who spend lives of the most laborious idleness. Instead of joining the long thread of honest ants stretching from the nest to the next garden busied in supplying food to the nurseries, they hang about the doors, eking out a day spent in sham industry by retiring at intervals to perform an elaborate toilet. Between whiles the loafer makes a rush along the high road, travelling violently for about a yard, jostling all the laden returners, stopping most of them to ask common-place questions, or to wonder at their burdens, and then, as if struck by a bright idea, or the sudden remembrance of something, he turns sharp round and rushes home—tumbling headlong into the nest with an avalanche of *débris* behind him which it will take the whole colony a long time to bring out again. The loafer, meanwhile, retires to clean his legs. Sometimes he raises a false alarm and skirmishes valiantly in the rear with an imaginary foe, or he enters into combat with a very small fly, the unsuspected possessor of a powerful sting, whereupon the unhappy loafer, with his tail curled up to his mouth, rolls about in agony, until a policeman catches sight of him, and seeing that he is either drunk, riotous, or incapable, nips him into two pieces, which the first passer-by carries off to the nest to feed the family. An honest ant, on the other hand, has no equal for fixedness of purpose, and unflagging rapidity of execution. The day breaks, the front door is opened, and the honest ant ascends to day-light. He finds that a passer-by has

effaced the track along which he ran so often yesterday, but his memory is good, and natural landmarks abound. He casts about like a pigeon when first thrown up in the air, and then he is off! Straight up the path he goes to the little snag of stone that is sticking out, up one side of it and down the other, vanishes over the bank, picks his way through the forest of weeds, skirts lakes of dew, and, with an extraordinary instinct for a straight line, makes his way across yonder cucumber-bed to some far spot, where he knows is lying a stem of maize heavily laden with grain, and broken by the weight of some shortwinded crow on its way from the dead dog under the bridge. Then, with a fraction of a grain in his pincers, he hurries home, hands it over to the commissariat, and is out again for another. And so, if the grain holds out, he will go on until sunset, and when the pluffy, round-faced owls, sitting on the sentinel cypress trees, are screeching an *ilicet* to the lingering day-birds, the honest ant is busy closing up his doors, and before the mynas passing overhead and calling as they go to belated wanderers have reached the bamboo clumps which sough by the river, he will be sleeping the sleep of the honest. With industry, however, the catalogue of the virtues of ants begins and ends. They have an instinct for hard work, and, useless or not, they do it—in the most laborious way they can; but except for the wisdom which industry argues, ants have no title to the epithet of “wise.” Until they learn that to run up one side of a post and down the other is not the quickest way

of getting past the post, and that in throwing up mounds on garden-paths they are giving hostages to a ruthless gardener, they can scarcely be accused of even common sense.

11, 267

---

IX.

WHY should it be a rule with wandering dogs to leave their marks in every flower-bed, and why should errant cats always dig for treasure where seeds have been lately sown? Why should the former trot about all night amongst the vegetables, or the latter hold their dalliance and serenades in verandahs, their ululations and high falutins on the steps of your bath-room? But the pariah-dog is a child of sin and prince of paupers, your true licensed loafer, unshackled alike by the regulations of etiquette or the Penal Code, and living beyond the reach of libel. His food is rags, and his residence Asia. He carries his bed with him, and pays nothing for carriage: no one stops him for octroi. His life is a monotony of sin and ill-usage, and his undertakers are flying overhead. He slouches past, each gesture a major felony, as if, barely escaped from the gallows, he was anticipating suicide, and is for ever running the gauntlet. He is an authority upon misery. This dog, however, is the vagrom species—not the municipal pariah that fights in the market-place for the leg of a meagre hen, or hazards his life on the heel of a shoe; for the municipal pariah has grown courageous amongst

bare legs, and waxed fat on the memory of the kid's head he whilom stole, treating with contumely and bitter derision the non-municipal dog that lives by following his nose, and dies at a cost of two annas to the State.

Not so the cat. She is a firebrand and the loadstone of turbulent characters. Although befriended and befed, she simulates extreme houselessness, aping the vices without having the excuses of the pariah-dog. After eating and drinking at home even to discomfort, she reconnoitres the neighbour's pantry, joins issue with the cat in possession, or skirmishes with the terrier in charge of the verandah. Sudden death she systematically avoids by mysterious evanishments, and after wantonly re-appearing at intervals during the evening, settles down for a *soirée musicale* as close to the house as possible—finishing up, as it transpires in the morning, with a rapid *trois-temps*, on the latest-made flower-bed.

~~~~~

X.

THE mallie \* accordingly loathes cats, for they increase his work, and a mallie looks upon work as a luxury reserved for his superiors. He denies himself, and will only indulge in it on compulsion. His avocations are to wander a little all about, to take note of various articles to be disposed of in the bazaar for the benefit of his privy

purse, perhaps to expel a pariah-dog from the garden, and to stand shouting after it in a fitful and hysterical manner long after the dog has forgotten him, and then, with a small hoe by his side, to ensconce his person in some shady and remote corner, where he can enjoy "rest without drowsiness and without snoring repose." The mallie training a creeper or watering the balsams, has a pleasant time of it, for he makes a bondsman of the mate,\* to the end that he shall always fill the water-pots for him; but when the time arrives for weeding the rose-bushes, or pegging down the verbenas, the scene is changed. Shed thorns beset the mallie's person, sharp stones trifle with his tenderest feelings, and he sits on sufferance. A scorpion may come up from any hole, mistaking the supersedent mallie for the shadows of night, or a wasp may be busy beneath him, and such mishaps are calculated to breed suspicion in the most confiding nature. After the second scorpion a sucking infant would become a cynic, and Sarti the artist, who used to leave his baby daughter at the foot of the tinsel Madonna in the great Cathedral of Milan, grow distrustful. In the hot weather the milk of the mallie's human kindness 'curdles', his temper perceptibly sours, for the demon of constant irrigation hovers before him, and his life becomes a struggle with trickling water. For the other two-thirds of the year he is inoffensive and very feeble; like a plantain fruit he has a thick skin but no kernel; sitting on the earth he grows earthy, as the

---

† The under-gardener.

chameleon assimilating his colour to that of his surroundings, passed by unsuspected and recognized with surprise. At times you meet with him in lonely corners dejectedly gazing upon the tomatoes, or with stealthy step moralizing among the green chillies. Once a day he asserts his being by growing into sight on the verandah, and silently interposing in the line of your vision a wicker tray, which he calls his "dallie,"\* containing, not the head of his first-born as might be imagined from his forlorn expression, but an assortment of agri-horticultural produce which blends itself in your after-memory as being all plantain-leaf and parsley. The dallie goes to the kitchen, and the mallie to his lair, where he ponders over the wickedness of the birds that are scratching up the young peas, and strenuously exhorts the mate, since life is real, life is earnest, to labour and be a hero in the strife.

The mallie's mate is the mallie's prime minister,—his executive, his vicar—the arm which carries out the deep designs of the mallie's bald head. Whether he appears a brown island in a sea of cabbages, or a swart excrescence on the glistening path, the mallie's mate is never more than a lukewarm candidate for Nirvana, for after his lights he works. Though his presence seems incidental, and his performances fortuitous results, the absence of the mallie's mate would be conspicuous, for although at first sight a garden

---

The basketful of garden produce gathered for the day's consumption.

statue appears a man of business beside him, and the green parrots ravaging the guavas overhead his equals in usefulness, the mallie's mate is no sluggard. He resembles the chin which, now, that bonnet-strings are tied behind the head, seems of no particular use, but yet is essential; for to suppose that he could be dispensed with is as absurd as to suppose that a man's face could end with his lower teeth. Though studious of laborious ease he is not slothful, for—as some writer, is it Burton? says, “though it were a hard task to walk a mile behind a snail we may not call the snail lazy,”—slowness is not sloth. It is true he affects no labours, to quote Cowper, “that ask tough sinews,” but rather seeks for “such as may amuse, not tire.”

He scratches the earth as if it were his own head, and breaks up the lumps in the soil as if he loved them. Anon he muffles up the legs of the methodist cabbages, or tickles the potatoes with a pointed stick. He is a Uriah Heap in humbleness, and professes himself neither a philosopher nor aristocrat; for he troubles himself with no syllogisms in Barbara, prefers no claim to the Revenge of the Suedos, accounts himself no fit suitor for the daughter of Ypocras, stickles not for the noble privilege of the Harikiri. A foot of stick and no favour are all the mallie's mate requires to develope his inmost man. He will throw up three-inch parapets, intersect them with three-inch canals, triturate the mould into dust, and smooth it all down, till each partition looks comfortable enough to make a



lodging on the cold ground a sinful luxury and an abomination to Buddha, besides constituting an admirable register of the number and sizes of the dogs and cats that have crossed the garden during the night.

---

## XI.

BORN a slave, the pea-boy constitutes himself a tyrant. Unquestioned despot in the garden he drives the scrannel wren and brainless babblers forth from their shelter in the peas, while he fills his own graceless skin with the swelling pulse. Seated by his favourite guava tree he ruthlessly keeps off marauders, allowing them only to eat their fill elsewhere. He is hired to scare green parrots, but fraternizes with them. The wise crows know him and laugh him to scorn when, between bites, he lifts up his voice to outrage the welkin. Do the little birds care for him ? They know him too, and though from courtesy they may yield to his requests, they wait their time. They know that he will cry once promiscuously, once again as he approaches within sight of the verandah where his employer is sitting, and once again as he dives into the shade of the orange trees. His mouth is now too full for utterance, and so they straightway hop back merrily to their disturbed carouse. The pea-boy is indeed a mystery. That he should have become an institution is his only claim to praise, for he has nothing

intrinsical in his favour. His puffed-out stomach bears witness to the sudden and fruity nature of his food. He goes about, a pot of preserves, chow-chow undeveloped. His waist-cloth hangs in baggy folds in which he stores away the purloined produce. He walks before you conscious of undigested carrots. Sometimes he goes armed with a pellet-bow, but this is merely demonstration, as also are the piled marbles which he makes believe to shoot from it. Generally, he lives in the shade—distending his coarse pellicle with the produce he is paid to guard. And what a changing feast the revolving year brings round to him !

The gushing custard-apple with its crust of stones and silly pulp ; the bulky plantain heavy with its nutritious cones of sweet fluff ; the lush mango with its barbaric magnificence of golden skin and wealth of perfume ; the *lichi* hiding under a shell of ruddy brown its globe of translucent and delicately flavoured flesh ; the yellow *loquat* peach-skinned and pleasant, but prodigal of stones ; the blackguard *jack* trying under the guise of eccentricity to cloak its hideousness ; the enticing gooseberry in its crackling covering ; the solid guava with its fragrant stench ; the poisonous oxalic *calmuck*, the tart tamarind, the *toots* ridiculous in name and substance, the granite *bael*, and the plebeian *\*bair*. The citron, too, gorgeous and uselessly generous, hanging out to your hands its tons of shining fruit, guessing that you

will not pick them, knowing that you cannot want them, except to throw at the pea-boy ; the multitudinous oranges laughing in bunches through the green leaves, but so often, alas! soaking the juice they have secreted into their rinds, turning your first gratitude to resentment—fat-skinned and nice to pluck, but hollow-stomached and with each step wrapped up in cotton fibres ; the modest limes, the fruit of the sick, with their faint colour, fainter flavour and flood of pleasant juice ; the splendid shaddock that, weary of ripening, lays itself upon the ground and swells at ease ; the rank *popeyas* clustering beneath their coronals of shapely leaves ; the pomegranate, with its clustered rubies enflasked in bitter rind ; and the melons of many kinds. Nor are these his only prey, for though fruit garnish his meal and furnish dainty trifles to it, he spends the fierce onset of his first hunger on the humbler vegetables. The spare carrot and the solid turnip, the wrinkled lettuce, the tempting tomato with its polished lobes, the celery blanching in its pits, and, hiding their cool stores beneath rough leaves, the prickly cucumbers. Among all these the pea-boy thrives—awhile ; for they say pea-boys die young. That is perhaps the reason one never sees pea-men. Or, perhaps, shouting at intervals becomes a second nature to them, and they develope into chowkeydars, and die (for chowkeydars also are short-lived) of bronchial diseases. I rather hope they do.

---

## XII.

SCORUS has formally damned Solomon. How then shall any one be found to speak well of the bheesty's \* mother? And in truth the leatheriness of the dame forbids courtesy in her biographer; her dun-colored wrinkles are more than a breach of good manners; they are an affront to the commonwealth. She is lean, lean as the cannibal kine in Pharoah's vision, altogether an osseous process, and her angles scorn while they defy concealment. She looks as old as Alexander's elephant, as haggard as a Sybil or the San-Po, and might stand for the eldritch beldame who, Buddhists say, rows the spirits of the dead across the River Sandza. Her hair in her green antiquity was venerably white; it has now sered into a dirty and unreverend grey, and though still clinging to her skin, is dead and fleecy. It is strange that she should be still alive—the forbearance of those whom she has met has been great. The bullocks that all day long, with dislocated tails and uneven step, toil wearily up the steep well-incline, or jog unsteadily down it, are Sybarites to the bheesty's mother, for once a day they eat their fill. And she—indeed it were hard to say what is not a luxury to her, the vinegar with which Boaz tainted his bread, the pulse at which Daniel sate, the Baptist's locusts

---

\* The water-carrier.

unsweetened by his honey? If, as it is said, the poor are the world's feet, then is the bheesty's mother a toenail—a corn upon a small toe, for she has positively sounded the nadir depths of poverty. She lives as birds die, out of sight, but dies with great circumstance. The bheesty will make holiday at her demise, and amid the ululation of a green-skirted clan, her old husk will be put to bed for its long sleep.

Watch her where she sits at the door of that poor hut in which she lives, herself the poorest guest. Is she thinking? Are the frogs who croak in the well beside her thinking? Has Atropos dimpled cheeks, or Time the rosy thighs of Ganymede? "There is no gown," said Luther, "that worse becomes a woman than that she should appear to be wise." Then is the bheesty's mother becomingly clothed, for it is impossible to discern in her the semblance of wisdom. For her, indeed, there is hardly a world at all. Around her are the neems rank with clustered berries, the tamarind flushed with its strange beautiful bloom, the aloe uprearing from a rose of spiked leaves its bell-hung shafts, mango trees with their oval fruit pendant by their long thin stalks, acacias with their green faintly-smelling flowers, half dust, half hair—giving place in due season to multitudinous legumes that rattle with the slightest motion of the stealthy wind, vigilant watchmen that give warning that the vagabond breeze is stirring, and hidden

among which the tiresome cicada, noisy autocrat of the night, possesses itself of the evening air. These are all about her and more, but the bheesty's mother does not think of them. The amaltas tree may wag its yellow bunches at her or make itself ridiculous with sausage pods; and the vagabond babool, the poor vegetable which for a brief week in the twelve months, a yearly holiday, comes out clad in a veil of blossoms, to which through the day throng the bees, breathless and busy, and through the night the hawk-winged moths, those queer fantasies of Nature, large-eyed, stout-bodied—but what does the bheesty's mother know of all this? She hears the lusty keel-cuckoo shoot by with its dangerous, love-exciting cry, the bold black Mephistopheles of bird-dom that brings troubles into many a married bird's nest, and which screams the hot months through. But she has forgotten the legends of her youth, and listens to it screaming infamy to its mottled-plumaged mate without a thought. But still she has not forgotten all her youth; for as you pass her, her withered old hands rise instinctively to her head, to veil her face from a stranger's gaze. Her people told her, years upon years ago, that she must give up playing under the peepul trees, romping beside the well, must put on the modest sheet, and hide her face from the common eye. So much she remembers—the effect but not the cause, the act but not the reason—and she still shrouds her face, uncomely

though it has grown, from the passer-by. Pitiful old woman! Perhaps memory is a painful effort to you. To the very old retrospect often is an ungrateful process. The past is rough with broken expectations, sharp-gravelled with splintered hopes, and *Memory has tender feet*. It treads the lapsed years delicately, for at each step the path holds thorns, and few and far between are the green knolls of turf where its soles can pleasantly rest.



# The Indian Seasons.

---

I.—THE HOT WEATHER.

II.—THE RAINS

III.—THE COLD WEATHER.



# THE INDIAN SEASONS.

## I.

---

### SUB JOVE FERVIDO.

---

“ And the day shall have a sun  
That shall make thee wish it done.”

*Manfred.*

Is Manfred speaking of the hot weather, of May-Day in India? The hot weather is palpably here, and the heat of noon makes the length of the twelve hours intolerable. The mango-bird glances through the groves, and in the early morning announces his beautiful but unwelcome presence with his merle-melody. The cuckoo screams in a crescendo from some deep covert, and the crow-pheasant's note has changed to a sound which must rank among nature's strangest, with the marsh-bittern's weird booming, the drumming of the capercaillie, or the bell-tolling note of the prairie campanile. Now, too, round our eaves are hovering the hornets, and wasps

reconnoitre our verandahs. "Of all God's creatures," says Christopher North, "the wasp is the only one eternally out of temper," but he should have said this only of the British wasp, for the *Vespæ* of India, though from their savage garniture of colors and their ghastly elegance, very formidable to look on, are but feeble folk compared with their banded congener of England, the ruffian in glossy velvet and deep yellow, who assails one at all hours of the summer's day, lurking in fallen fruit, making grocers' shops as dangerous as viper-pits, an empty sugar-keg a very cockatrice den, and who spreads dismay at every picnic. But the wasp points this moral—that it requires no brains to annoy. A wasp stings as well without its head as with it.

Flies too now assume a prominence to which they are in no way entitled by their merits. Luther hated flies *quia sunt imagines diaboli et hæreticorum*, and with a fine enthusiasm worthy of the great Reformer, he smote Beelzebub in detail. "I am," he said one day as he sate at his dinner, his Boswell (Lauterbach) taking notes under the table—"I am a great enemy unto flies, for when I have a good book, they flock upon it, parade up and down upon it and soil it:" so Luther used to kill them with all the zeal of a bigot. And indeed the fly deserves death. It has no delicacy, and hints are thrown away upon the importunate insect. With a persistent insolence it returns to your nose, perching irreverently upon the feature, until sudden death cuts short its ill-mannered

career. In this matter my sympathies are rather with that Roman Emperor who impaled on pins all the flies he could catch, than with Uncle Toby, who, when he had in his power a ruffianly blue-bottle, let it go out of the window to fly into his neighbour's house and vex him the only consolation is that it probably got killed next door.

The sun is hardly up yet, so the doors are open. From the garden come the sounds of chattering hot-weather birds. "While eating," said the Shepherd, "say little, but look friendly," but the starlings (to give them their due and to speak more point-device—the "rose-coloured pastors,") do not at all respect the advice of James Hogg, for while eating they say much, looking the while most unfriendly. They have only just arrived from Syria—indeed, in their far-off breeding cliffs, there are still young birds waiting for their wings before leaving for the East—and they lose no time in announcing their arrival. The unhappy owner of the mulberry grove yonder wages a bitter conflict with them, and from their numbers his pellet-bow thins out many a rosy thief. The red cotton-tree is all aflame with burning scarlet, each branch a chandelier lit up with clusters of fiery blossom, and to it in the early heat come flocking, "with tongues all loudness," a motley crowd of birds, thirsting for the cool dew which has been all night collecting in the floral goblets, and been sweetened by the semul's honey. Among them the pastors revel, drinking, fighting, and chattering from early dawn to blazing noon. But as the sun strengthens

all nature begins to confess the heat, and even the crow caws sadly. On the water the sun dances with such a blinding sparkle that the panoplied crocodile, apprehensive of asphyxia, will hardly shew his scales above the river, and the turtles tuck their heads under the solah-topees of their backs, shrewdly suspecting a *coup-de-soleil*. On the shaded hillside the herded pig lie dreamily grunting, and in the deep coverts the deer stretch themselves secure. The peasants in the fields have loosed their bullocks for a respite; and while they make their way to the puddles, their masters creep under their grass huts to eat their meal, smoke their pipes and doze.

But in the cities the heat of noon is worse. There is hardly the relief of green leaves and running water. The white sun-light lies upon the paths so palpable a heat that it might be peeled off: the bare blinding walls surcharged with heat, refuse to soak in more, and reject upon the air the fervour beating down upon them; in the dusty hollows of the roadside the pariah-dogs lie sweltering in dry heat: beneath the trees sit the crows, their beaks agape: the buffaloes are wallowing in the shrunken mud-holes—but not a human being is abroad of his own will. At times a chuprassie with his head swathed in cloths trudges along through the white dust, or a camel, his cloven feet treading the hot soft surface of the road as if it were again pressing the sand plains of the Khanates, goes lounging by; but the world holds

the midday to be intolerable, and has renounced it, seeking such respite as it may from the terrible breath of that hot wind which is shrivelling up the face of nature, making each tree as dry as the Oak of Mambre, suffocating off it all that has life.

But the punkah-coolie is left outside. His lines have been cast to him on the wrong side of the tattie. The hot wind, whose curses the sweet kiss of the kus-kus turns to blessings, whose oven-stench passes into our houses with a borrowed fragrance, finds the punkah-coolie standing undefended in the verandah, and blows upon him; the sun sees him, and as long as he can stares at him; until the punkah-coolie, in the stifling heat of May-Day, almost longs for the flooded miseries of Michaelmas. But he has his revenge. In his hands he holds a rope—a punkah-rope—and beneath the punkah sits his master writing. On either side, and all round him piled carefully are arranged papers, light, flimsy sheets, and on each pile lies a paper-weight. And the punkah swings backward and forward with a measured flight, the papers' edges responsive with a rustle to each wave of air. And the writer, wary at first and easily outwitting the crafty breeze, grows careless. The monotony of the air has put him off his guard, and here and there a paper-weight has been removed. Now is the coolie's time. Sweet is revenge! and suddenly with a jerk the punkah wakes up, sweeping in a wider arc, and with a rustle of many wings the piled papers slide whispering to the floor. But why

loiter to enumerate the coolie's small revenges ?—the mean tricks by which, when you rise, he flips you in the eye with the punkah fringe, disordering your hair and sweeping it this way and that ; the petty retaliation of finding out a hole in the tattie, and flinging water through it on to your matting, angering the dog that was lying in the cool damp shade. These and such are the coolie's revenges, when the hot weather by which he lives embitters him against his kind. But at night he developes into a fiend, for whom a deep and bitter loathing possesses itself of the hearts of men. It is upon him that the strong man, furious at the sudden cessation of the breeze, makes armed sallies. It is on him that the mosquito-bitten subaltern, wakeful through the oil-lit watches of the night, empties the phial of his wrath and the contents of his chillumchee : who shares with the griff's dogs the uncompromising attentions of boot-jacks and riding-whips. For him ingenious youth devises rare traps, cunning pyramids of beer-boxes with a rope attached—curious penalties to make him suffer—for the coolie, after the sun has set, becomes a demoralized machine that requires winding up once every twenty minutes, and is not to be kept going without torture. And thus for eight shillings a month he embitters your life, making the punkah an engine wherewith to oppress you.

It is Cardan I think who advises men to partake some times of unwholesome food if they have an extraordinary liking for it ; it is not always well, he would tell us, to be

of an even virtue. What a poor thing, for instance, were an oyster in constant health: ladies' caskets would then want their pearls. Who does not at times resent the appearance of a friend who is comfortably fat, come weal or woe!—the uniform hilarity of Mark Tapley recommends itself to few. Thus, too, the nunnery of San Pantaleone gained in reverence by the Abbess' discovery of the friar's breeches. But to the punkah-coolie, how inexplicable our theorizing on the evil of monotonous good! To him anything good is so rare, that he at once assimilates it when he meets with it to his ordinary evil. He cannot trust himself to believe the metal in his hand is gold. Given enough he commits a surfeit, and tempted with a little he lusts after too much. Indulgence with the coolie means license, and a conditional promise a *carte blanche*. And thus he provokes ill-nature. Usually it depends—and the truth is one worth noting—upon the master, whether service be humiliation; but the punkah-coolie is such “a thing of dark imaginings,” that he too often defies sympathy, sickening pity before it is full grown. The Devil even will not insist upon the reversion of the coolie, which is his.

I have three coolies, and I call them Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, for they have stood the test of fire: and Shadrach is an idiot. Upon him the wily Meshach foists his work, and at times even the cross Abednego can shuffle his periods of toil upon the broad shoulders of Shadrach. He is slate-coloured when

dry; in the rains he resembles a bheesty's mussuck. In his youth he was neglected, and in his manhood his paunch hath attained an unseemly rotundity. Not that I would have it supposed he is portly. His dimensions have been induced by disease. His thin face knows it, and wears an expression of deprecating humility, to which his conscious legs respond in tremulous emotions. His life is a book without pictures. His existence is set to very sad music. The slightest noise within the house is sufficient to set Shadrach pulling like a bell-ringer on New Year's Eve; but a very few minutes suffice to plunge him into obese oblivion, and then the punkah waggles feebly, until a shout again electrifies it into ferocity. It is always when Shadrach is pulling that the punkah-rope breaks; when more water than usual splashes through the tattie I make sure that the ladle is in Shadrach's hands. Meshach is of another sort. He is the oldest of the three, and when he condescends to the rope, pulls the punkah well. But, as a rule, he allows Shadrach to do his work, for as often as I look out Meshach is lying curled up under a pink cloth asleep and Shadrach is pulling. He has established a mastery over his fellows, and by virtue, so I believe, of that pink cloth which voluminously girds his wizened frame, exacts a respect to which his claim is forged. They are the Children of the Lotus and he their wise Hermogene. In a grievance, Meshach is spokesman, but in a case of a disagreement arising, the master's



wrath falls always, somehow, on one of the others. When pay-day comes, Meshach sits familiarly in the verandah with the regular retainers of the household; while Shadrach and Abednego await their wages at a distance standing foolishly in the sun. Abednego is a man of great physical power, and of something less than average intelligence. He is noisy at times, and may be heard quarrelling with the bheesty who comes to fill the tattie-pots, or grumbling when no one appears to relieve him at the right moment. But altogether he is a harmless animal, turning his hand cheerfully to other work than his own, and even rising to a joke with the mallie. But Meshach holds him in subjection.

But while I have been writing, the hot day is passing. The sun is going down the hill, but yet not so fast as to explain the sudden gloom which relieves the sky. In the west has risen a brown cloud, and the far trees tell of a rising wind. It nears swiftly, before it driving a flight of birds. The wind must be high, for the kite cannot keep its balance, and in vain attempts to beat up against it. The crow yields to it without a struggle, and goes drifting eastward; the small birds shoot right and left for shelter. It is a dust-storm. The brown cloud has risen well above the trees, and already the garden is aware of its approach. You can hear the storm gathering up its rustling skirts for a rush through the tree-tops. With a roar it sweeps up, embanked in fine clouds of dust, and strikes the house. At once every door

bursts open, or shuts to, the servants shout, the horses in the stables neigh, and while the storm is passing a pall lies upon the place. Out of windows the sight is limited to a few yards, beyond which may be only mistily made out the forms of strong trees bowing before the fierce blast with their boughs all streaming in one direction. The darkness is like that mysterious murk which rested on the fabled land of Hannyson—"alle covered with darkness withouten any brightnesse or light: so that no man may see ne heren ne no man dar entren in to hem. And natheless thei of the Contree sey that some tyme men heren voys of Folk and Hors nyzenge and Cokkes crowynge. And men witen well that men dwellen there, but knowe not what men." Hark! there *are* voices of folk: from the stables come the "nyzenge of hors;" from the direction of the fowl-house a "voys of cokkes crowynge," and the murk of Hannyson is over all. As suddenly as it came the storm has gone. The verandahs are full of dead leaves, the tattie-door has fallen, and some tiles are lying on the ground, but the storm is over, has swept on to the river. Out upon the river the sudden rippling of the water, the brown haze beyond the bank, have warned the native steersman to make for the land. Over his head sweep and circle the river-fowl, the keen-winged terns and piping sand-birds, the egret and the ibis, and as he nears the shore he sees the sudden hurrying on the vessel decks, hears the cries of the boatmen as they hasten to haul down the clumsy sails and in

another minute his own boat is rocking about and bumping among the others, for the storm is upon the river. Between the banks is sweeping up the sand-laden wind concealing from the huddled boats the temples and the ghat across the river, the bridge that spans it and the sky itself. But of a sudden the storm has passed and the river is flowing quietly. For a while the air is cooler, but the sun has not been blown out, and Parthian-like he shoots his keenest arrows in retreat. And as the shadows lengthen along the ground, the heat changes from that of a bonfire to that of an oven. When the sun is in mid-heaven, we recognize the justice of the heat, abhor it as we may. The sun is hot. But when he has gone, we resent the accursed legacy of stifling heat he leaves us. His posthumous calor is intolerable. It chokes the breath by its dead intensity, like the fell atmosphere that hung round the dragon-daughter of Ypocras in her bedevilled castle in the Isle of Colos.

A wind makes pretence of blowing, but while it borrows heat from the ground, it does not lend it coolness. The world is abroad again. Children go by with their nurses: the shops are doing business. In the bazaars the every-day crowd is noisy, along the roads the red-aproned bheesties sprinkle their feeble handfuls, and the world is out to enjoy such pleasures as it may on May-Day "in the plains." In the country the peasant is brisk again, and trudges away from his work cheerily: bands of women affect to make merry with discordant

singing as they pass along the fields: the miry cattle are being herded in the villages. And in the garden the birds assemble to say good-night. They are all in the idlest of humours, and, their day's work over, are sauntering about in the air, and from tree to tree, or congregating in vagrom do-nothing crowds, as in England smock-clad and furry-hatted villagers on a Sunday afternoon lounge in groups round the church—the elders idle, the younger mischievous. In birddom the crows take the place of children, and spend the *mauvais quart d'heure* in vexing their betters. An old kite, tired with his long flights and sulky under the grievance of a shabbily-filled stomach, crouches on the roof, his feathers ruffled about him. He is not looking for food: it is getting too late, and he knows that in half an hour his place will be taken by the owls, and that before long the jackals will be trying to worry a supper off the bones which he scraped for his breakfast. But the crow is in no humour for sentiment. He has stolen during the day, and eaten, enough to make memory a joy for ever. On his full stomach he grows pert, and in his vulgar, street-boy fashion, affronts the ill-fed bird of prey. With a wily step he approaches him from behind, and pulls at his longest tail feather—or sidling alongside pecks at an outstretched wing. Even when inactive, his simple presence worries the kite, for he cannot tell what his tormentor is devising. But he has not long to wait, for the crow, which from a foot off has

been derisively studying the kite in silence, suddenly opens his mouth, and utters a cry of warning. The chattering garden is hushed, small birds escape to shelter, the larger fly up into the air or on to the highest coigns of vantage, and look round for the enemy. The crow, encouraged by success, again warns the world, and his brethren come flocking round, anxious to pester something, but not quite certain as to the danger that threatens. But the crow is equal to the occasion, and by wheeling in a circle round the inoffensive kite, and making a sudden swoop towards it, points out to them the object of his feigned terror. At once his cue is taken, and with a discord of cries, to which Pisani's angry barbiton in the story of *Zanoni* was music, they surround the unhappy bird. It seems as if at every swoop they would strike the crouching kite from his perch, but they know too well to tempt the curved beak, the curved talons, and though approaching near they never touch him. The kite has only to make the motion of flight, and his pursuers widen their circles. But he cannot submit to the indignity any longer, and slowly unfolding his wide wings, the kite launches himself upon the air. Meanwhile, the sparrows are clubbing under the roof, and their discussions are noisy. The mynas pace the lawn, exchanging observations promiscuously with their fellows by their side, or those who pass homeward overhead. The little birds are slipping into the bushes, where they will pass the hours

of sleep ; while from everywhere come the voices of nature making arrangements for the night. One little bird closes the day with a song of thanks. He is a sweet little songster—do you know him?—a dapper bird, dressed, as a gentleman should be in the evening, in black and white, with a shapely figure, a neatly-turned tail, and all the gestures of a bird of the world. Choosing a low bough, one well-leaved, he screens himself from the world, and for an hour pours out upon the hot evening air a low sweet throbbing song. He appears to sing unconsciously : like Santley's, his notes run over of their own accord, without any effort. The bird is rather thinking aloud in song than singing. I have seen him warbling in the wildest, poorest corner of the garden, all alone it seemed at first. But soon I saw sitting above him, with every gesture of interested attention, two crested bulbuls, the nightingales of Hafiz. They were listening to the little solitary minstrel, recognizing in the pied songster a master of their song. And so he went on singing to his pretty audience until the moon began to rise, and with a sudden rush from behind the citrons' shade the night-jar tumbled out upon the evening air.



## II.

### SUB JOVE PLUVIO.

"For the rain it raineth every day."

*Twelfth Night.*

IN THE RAINS! Punkah-coolies have had a very narrow escape of making their fortunes, but the vision, if they entertained it, has vanished with the brown grass; has disappeared with the sand-banks in the river; has, in fact, been washed out by the rains. Punkah-coolies, however, are not the only beings or things affected by this revolution of the seasons, for the despotic *bursat* has worked notable changes in the market. Out-of-doors is at a discount, thermantidotes are dull, scorpions lively, tiles falling, and white-ants looking up. Billiards supersede racquets; and children, uproarious with the thermometer at 96° under the punkah, are looking quieter. Pretty wives are forbidden more dogmatically than ever to go into the garden in the evenings; and damp, snakes, scorpions, and fever are potent weapons, mighty arrows, in the hands of the giant of the house. Griffs are warned to look at their venetians before they shut them, as cobras prefer sitting on venetians to sitting anywhere else; and

never to go into a bath-room without a light, for scorpions most do congregate in bath-rooms. The animal world has certainly made the rains peculiarly their own. Convinced themselves that zoology is the finest study in the world, they carry their doctrine at their tails' point to convince others. Every one must learn and be quite clear about the difference between a black mosquito with white spots and a lanky lean mosquito all grey. There must be no confusion between a fly that stings when any one sits upon it and a fly that stings when it sits upon any one. Leaking roofs transiently dispute their province with the insects, but many people aver, and apparently in good faith, that none of their roofs leak by any chance, but they never profess to ignore the insect invaders—the bullety beetles and maggoty ants. Nobody can profess to do so. It is impossible to appear unconscious of long-legged terrors that silently drop on your head, or shiny, nodular ones that rush at your face and neck with a buzz in the steamy evenings in the rains. A tarantula on the towel-horse, especially if it is standing on tiptoe, is too palpable, and no one can pretend not to see it there. Spiders weighing an ounce, however harmless, are too big and too “pluffy” to be treated with complete indifference. Then there is a pestilent animal resembling a black-beetle with its head nearly pulled off, having fish-hooks at the ends of its legs, with which it grips you by the nape of the neck—will not let go. Centipedes, enjoying a luxury of legs,



(how strange that they are not proud !) think nothing, a mere trifle at most, of leaving all their toes sticking behind them when they walk across your face. It is an undecided point whether the toes do not grow new legs ; at any rate the centipede grows new toes. Ridiculous round beetles tumble on their backs and scramble and slide about the dinner-table till they get a purchase on the cruet-stand, up which they climb in a deliberate and solemn manner, and having reached the top go forth-with headlong into the mustard. Sometimes they get out again unperceived, but an irregular track of mustard on the cloth, with a drop wherever the beetle stopped to take breath, leads to the discovery of the wanderer sitting among the salad and pretending to be a caper. Then again there are oval beetles, which never tumble on their backs, but dart about so quickly that you are uncertain whether something did or did not go into the soup, until you find them at the bottom. Many other insects come to the festive board, unbidden guests ; grasshoppers, with great muscular powers, but a deplorable lack of direction ; minute money spiders that drop from your eyebrows by a thread which they make fast to your nose ; flimsy-winged flies that are always being singed, and forthwith proceed to spin round on their backs and hum in a high key ; straw-coloured crickets that sit and twiddle their long antennæ at you as if they never intended moving again, and then suddenly launch themselves with a jerk into space or your claret ; fat, comfortable-bodied moths, with thick slippery wings,

which bang *phut-phut* against the ceiling, and go on banging at intervals, until with a splutter and flare-up they succeed in dropping themselves down the chimney of the lamp. All these, however, are the ruck, the rabble, the tag-rag and bob-tail that follow the leader—the white-ant.

The White-Ant! The lamps are seen through a yellow fog, a corn-coloured haze; the side-board is strewn with shed wings; the night-lights flicker in a paste of corpses, and the corners of the rooms are alive with creeping fluttering ants, less hideous, it is true than in the “infernal wriggle of maturity,” but more noisome because more expeditious. The novelty of wings soon palls upon the white-ants—they find they are a snare and a delusion, and try to get rid of them as soon as possible. They have not forgotten the first few minutes of their winged existence, when they were drifting on the wind with birds all round them, when so many of their brothers and sisters disappeared with a snap of a beak, and when they themselves were only saved from the same fate by being blown into a bush. From this refuge they saw their comrades pouring out of the hole in the mud wall, spreading their weak wide wings, giving themselves up to the wind, which gave them up to the Brahminy kites wheeling and re-curving amongst the fluttering ants, to the crows, noisy and coarse even at their food, to the quick darting mynas, and the graceful, sliding

king-crow. A mongoose on the bank made frequent raids upon the unwinged crowd that was swarming at the mouth of the hole, keeping an eye the while on the kites, which ever and anon, with the easiest of curves, but the speed of a crossbow bolt, swooped at him as he vanished into his citadel. Overhead sate a vulture in the sulks, provoked at having been persuaded to come to catch ants ["Give me a good wholesome cat out of the river"] and wondering that the kites could take the trouble to swallow such small morsels. But, in spite of the vulture, we must confess that white-ants are in the rains an important feature. The fields may blush green and jungles grow in a week, but unless the white-ants and their allies—hard-bodied and soft-bodied—come with the new leaves, the rains would hardly be the rains.

RAINING! and apparently not going to stop. The trees all in their places are standing quiet like whipped children, not a leaf daring to stir while the thunder scolds. Now and again comes up a blast of wet wind driving the rain into fine spray before it and shaking all the garden. The bamboos are taken by surprise, and sway in confusion here and there, but, as the wind settles down to blow steadily, sweep their plumed boughs in graceful unison. The tough teak tree feels the wind and flaps its thick leaves lazily; the jamoon is fluttered from crown to stem; the feathery tamarinds are shivering in consternation, and panic-stricken the

acacias toss about their tasselled leaves. There is something almost piteous in the way the plantain receives the rude wind, throws up its long leaves in despair, now drops them down again, now flings them helplessly about. But it is not often that there is high wind with the rain. Generally there is only rain—very much. The birds knew what was coming when they saw the drifting clouds being huddled together and worked up into a dark mass, and then spread out like a grey plaster on the coiling of the sky, and the air has been filled this hour past with their warning cries. They have now gone clamorous home. But after a long interval come the late birds, who have dawdled over their last worm too long, calling out as they pass to their comrades far ahead to wait for them; and then, after another while, comes “the last bird”—for when the storm is at its worst, there is always one more bird to pass, flying too busily to speak, and which scuds heavily across the sloping rain, cutting its way to a dry resting-place as straight as did the Dove of the Deluge. The green parrots, birds of the world as they are, went over long ago, screaming and streaming by. The crows too, after casting about for a nearer shelter, have flung themselves across the sky towards the hospitable city. One young crow meant to have seen the storm out, and so he kept his seat on the roof, and in the insolence of his glossy youth rallied his old relatives escaping from the wet; but a little later, as he flapped his spongy wings ruefully

homeward, he regretted that he had not listened to the voice of experience. For the rain is raining—raining as if the water was sick of life—raining as if the rain hated the earth with its flowers and fruits. The clouds have a great deal to get rid of, and they mean that it shall all be gone before night. There is more, they know, coming up with the night wind which it will take them till the morning to bale out.

And now the paths begin to show how heavy the shower is. On either side runs down a fussy stream, all pitted with rain pock-marks, from which jut out pigmy Teneriffes in a mimic Atlantic, the larger kunkur stones; but the rain still comes down, and the two fussy streams have joined into a shallow smoothly-flowing sheet, and there is nothing from bank to bank but speckled water-bubbles hurrying down, but, haste as they may, getting their crowns broken by the rain-drops before they reach the corner. And now you begin to suspect rain on the sunken lawn; but before long there is no room for mere suspicion, for the level water is showing white through the green grass, in which the shrubs stand ankle-deep. How patiently the flowers stand in their ditches, bending their poor heads to the ground, and turning up their green calices to be pelted! But besides the trees and flowers and washed-out insects, there are but few creatures out in the rain. Here comes a seal carrying a porpoise on his back. No! it is our brown friend the bheesty. Dripping like a sea-weed, a thing of all wea-

thers, he splashes by through the dreary waste of waters like one of the pre-Adamite creatures in the Period of Sludge. Who can want water at such a time as this? you feel inclined to ask, as the shiny bheesty with his shiny mussuck squelches past, his red apron, soaked to a deep maroon clinging, to his knees. A servant remembers something left out of doors, and with his master's wrath very present to him, detaches his mouth from the hookah, bowl and with his foolish skirts tucked round his waist, paddles out into the rain, showing behind his plaited umbrella like a toadstool on its travels. A young pariah-dog goes by less dusty and less miserable than usual. The rain has taken the curl out of his tail, has washed away his landmarks from the familiar posts and pillars—but he is, and he knows it, safer in the rain. There are no buggies passing now, from beneath whose hoods, as the vivid lightning leaps out of the black clouds, will leap sharp whip-lashes, curling themselves disagreeably round his thin loins, or tingling across his pink nose. There are no proud carriages with arrogant drivers to be rude to him if he stands still for a minute in the middle of the road to think; no old pariah-dogs on the watch to dispute, and probably to ravish from him, his infrequent treasure-trove. The worms, too, like the rain, for they can creep easily over the slab ground, opening and shutting up, their bodies like telescopes. The dank frogs doat on it; they hop impatiently out, albeit in a stealthy way, from clammy corners behind

pillars and under flower-pots, to see if their ditches are filling nicely, and hop back happy. But there is one creature to whom rain is an unmixed abomination—the punkah-cooly, for whom the architect forgot to build a verandah. He sits perched, like a desolate fowl, on an empty beer-box, under a roof of his own construction fearfully and wonderfully made out of remnants—not however so cunningly devised but that the resolute ruthless rain finds its way in, soaking the cooly on his cramped perch, and sopping his wretched “property” in the corner, a brown cloth and a pink cloth, a dingy horse-rug variegated with dingier patches, a shiny brass lota, and a yard of string. But the rain has no bowels.

When it rains there are, to those inside the house, two sounds, a greater and a less, and it is curious, and very characteristic of our humanity, that the less always seems the greater. The one is the great dead sound of falling water—the out-of-doors being rained upon—a universal one-toned rushing sound almost too large to hear. The other is the splashing of our vulgar eaves. Outside, the heavens are falling in detail, but the sound comes to us only in its great expanse, more large than loud, heard only as a vast mutter. At our verandah’s edge is a poor spout noisily spurting its contents upon the gravel-path, and yet it is only to our own poor spout that we give heed. If it gives a sudden spurt, we say, “How it is raining! just

listen"—to the spout. The sullen roar of the earth submitting to the rain over half a province we hardly remark. We listen to the patch of plantains complaining of every drop that falls upon them, but take no note of the downward rush of water on the long-suffering silent grass. But when it is raining be so good as to remark the ducks. They are being bred for your table, a private speculation of the cook's, but they are never fed, so they have to feed themselves. Dinner deferred maketh a duck mad, so they sally forth at once in a quackering series to look for worms. Nevertheless they loiter to wash. Was ever enjoyment more thorough than that of ducks accustomed to live in a cook-house (in the corner by the stove, and barred from the wet outside by a barricade of brazen dishes) who have been let out on a rainy day? They can hardly waddle for joy, and stagger past jostling each other with ill-balanced and gawky gestures. And now they have reached the water. How they duck their heads and plume their feathers, turning their beaks over their backs and quackering in subdued tones! In their element they grow courageous, for the communist crow who has left his shelter to see "what on earth those ducks can have got," and who has settled near them, is promptly charged, beak lowered, by the valiant drake, who waggles his curly tail in pride as the evil fowl goes flapping away. But let the ducks quacker their short lives out in the garden puddles—the carrion crow is off to the river, for the great river is in flood, and



many a choicemorsel, he knows, is floating down to the sea. Videlicet the succulent kid; fowls surprised on their nests by the sudden water; young birds that had sat chirping for help on bush and stone as the flood rose up and up, the parent birds fluttering round powerless to help but wild with protracted sorrow; snakes which hiding in their holes had hoped to tire out the water, but which, when the banks gave way, were swept struggling out into the current; the wild cat's litter which the poor mother with painful toil had carried into the deepest cranny of the rock, drowned in a cluster, and floating down the river to the muggurs.

The muggur is a gross pleb, and his features stamp him low-born. His manners are coarse. The wading heifer has hardly time to utter one terror-stricken groan ere she is below the crimson-bubbled water. Ill luck is the rash herdsman's if he leads his kine across the flood. The water-fowl floating on the river, the patient ibis, the grave sarus-cranes, fare ill if they tempt the squalid bruto. The ghurial is of a finer breed. Living in the water he seeks his food in it, and does not flaunt his Maker with improvidence by wandering on the dry earth in search of sustenance. But at times the coarse admixture of his blood shows out, and he imitates his vulgar cousin by lying by the water's edge, where the grazing kine may loiter, the weary peasant be trudging unobservant towards his home, his little son gathering drift-wood along the flood line as he goes.

Over on the broad lagoon, the grey-white kingfisher, with its shrill cry, is shooting to and fro where yesterday the feeble-winged babblers were wrangling over worms : the crocodile rests his chin on the grass-knoll where twenty hours ago two rats were making love. See the kingfisher how he darts from his watch-tower, checks suddenly his forward flight, starts upwards for a moment, hovering over the water with craning neck. And now his quick beating wings close, and straight as a falling aërolite, his keen strong beak cleaving the way before him, he—*drops* ! And with what an exultant sweep he comes up, with the fish across his bill ! The kingfisher is too proud to blunder : if he touches the water he strikes his prey ; but rather than risk failure, he swerves when, in his downward course to swerve had seemed impossible, and skimming the ruffled surface goes back to his watch-tower. He would not have his wife on the dead branch yonder see him miss his aim ; rather than hazard discomfiture he simulates contempt, turning back with a cheery cry to her side, while the lucky fishlet darts deep among the weeds.

The great river is in flood. Miles down they will know it by the sudden rush—the bridges of boats that will part asunder, and the clumsy high-prowed native craft that will sink ; but here, where the mischief has its source, where the heavy rain is falling and the deluge brewing, there is nothing to mark the change. But the river swells up secretly, as it were, from underneath ;

the flood is to be a surprise ; and lo, suddenly, the water is spread out on either side, over crops and grass fields. Where are the islands gone on which the wiseacre adjutant-birds were yesterday promenading ? Are those babool trees or fishermen's *machans* out yonder in the middle of the river ? Surely there used to be a large field hereabouts with a buffalo's whitened skull lying in the corner, and a young mango tree growing about the middle of it ? Can that be the mango tree yonder where the current takes a sudden swerve ? Alas for the squirrels that had their nest in it ! Alas for the vagrant guinea-fowl which far from home had her speckly eggs hidden in the tall tussock of sharp-edged grass which grew by the buffalo's skull !

Those two villages yonder were yesterday separated only by a green valley streaked by a hundred footpaths ; they now look at each other across a lake. The kine used to know their way home, but are puzzled. Here, they feel certain, is the tree at which yesterday they turned to the right, and this is the path which led them down a hill and up another, but it ends to-day in water ! How cautiously they tread their way, sinking lower, lower—so gradually that we can hardly tell that they have begun to swim ; but there is now a rod and more between the last cow and the shore where the herdsman stands watching. He sees them climb out on the other side, one behind the other, sees their broad backs sloped against the hill before him. Then they reach the top

---

and lowing break into a trot, disappearing gladly behind the mud walls which contain their food and beds, and the herdsman turns and trudges the circuit of the invading water. His wife will have to-night to wait an hour for him and for her dinner.



### III.

#### SUB JOVE BENIGNO.

Ah! if to thee  
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,  
An exiled mortal, sounds its pleasant name!

\* \* \* \* \*  
O let me cool me zephyr-boughs among!

*Endymion.*

CHRISTMAS EVE! Overhead is stretched the tent of heaven, and beneath the dome are ranged in full durbar the rajah-planets, attendant on them crowds of courtier-asteroids and stars. The durbar is assembled to welcome Christmas Day. The moon, the Viceroy of the day, is absent; but all the independent luminaries of the empire are in their places, and the splendour of Holkar or Rewah is as nothing to that of Orion. How quiet all is! Not a whisper or a movement as the galaxy of night awaits the arrival of Christmas Day.

I was waiting for it too. The night seemed so still and calm, that I felt as if somehow all the rest of the world had stolen away from their homes and gone somewhere, leaving me alone to represent the earth at the reception of Christmas. I half feared lest in the morning I should wake to find myself left behind. Not

that there were no sounds near me. There was my pony munching gram very audibly, my servants' hookahs sounded more noisily than usual, the dogs under the tree were gnawing bones, and not far from me, crouching beside a fire of wood, three villagers were cleaning the skin of a leopard. On the jheel behind me the wild geese were settling with congratulatory clamour.

It is not altogether without interest, that those notes which among birds give expression to the unamiable feelings of anger and animosity, are more musical than the notes of love and pleasure. Among human beings no passion has evoked such sweet song as love, although it is in our marches, national anthems and war songs that is asserted the majesty of music; and this is only rational, as it appears to us only rational that the speech of woman should be sweet and low, and that of man bold and full in tone. Among birds, however, the voice of love is more often wanting in sweetness. The bittern, when it calls to its mate, fills the dark reed-beds with the ghostliest sound that man has ever heard from the throat of a bird; the cluck of the wooing cock, that crows so grandly when aroused to wrath or jealousy, is ridiculous; the love note of the bulbul is an inarticulate animal noise; the crow pheasant—who does not know the *whoo-whoo-whoo* with which this strange bird, hidden in the centre foliage of a tree, summons its brooding mate? The mynas, again, how curious and inappropriate are their love notes! But show the bulbul another of his

sex, and in a voice most musically sweet he challenges the intruder to battle. Look at that strident king-crow swinging on the bamboo's tip. A rival passes, and with a long-drawn whistle he slides through the air, and in melodious antiphony the strangers engage. Let the cock hear the lord of another seraglio emptying his lungs, and with what lusty harmony will he send him back the challenge!

Quite near me, too, the river was flowing over and among large stones, with a constant bubbling and occasional splash. But beyond the few yards lit by my camp fires, in the great, pale, sleeping world lit only by the cold stars, lying far and away beyond my tents, was a monochrome of silence.

And I sate at my tent-door smoking, smoking, thinking of the day I had passed, the days before that, and the days before them. Christmas Eve! In an hour all the bells in England will be ringing in the Day; and, in one home at least, the little ones, an infrequent treat, will be sitting with firelit eyes and cheeks beside the fender, watching the chestnuts roast and the clock creep round to twelve. Yes; at home the children are sitting up, I know, to see Christmas Day in, and waiting, they grow tired. The moment arrives, the hand is at the hour, a chestnut is absorbing all attention, when on a sudden, with a clash from all the steeples, the mad bells fling out their music on the wild night. The great chestnut question is postponed, and, starting from the hearth rug, the

little voices chime together "A Merry Christmas"; and then, with clamorous salutations, the kisses are exchanged, and eager in conversation the little ones climb upwards to their cosy beds, the bells still clashing out on the keen winter air. And the old folks sit below, and, while the shivering Waits in the street are whining out their hideous thanksgiving, give one more thought to the year that is gone. And the last thought is always a sad one. For after all, on this pleasant planet of ours, Life, with its periods of hard work and its intervals of careless leisure, is happy enough. What though we do come into it with our miseries ready-made, and only the materials for our pleasures provided? Somehow I had fashioned my pleasures very much to my liking in the year that was gone, and as I looked back on it, there were few days, cold, hot, or rainy, that did not, now that they were dead, come back to me, as I sat there thinking, as pleasant memories.

Christmas Eve! no bells, no beef, no holly, no mistletoe, nearer than the Himalayas! Christmas Eve without a dance, without a murmur, without a single "merry Christmas" wish! Christmas Eve and no chilblains, no miserable Waits, no Christmas boxes or Christmas bills! well, well—the past is the past, a bitter-sweet at best; let it pass. Our Christmas Eve in India is a strange affair. Instead of church-bells we have jackals, and instead of cheerful holly-berries the weird moon-convolvulus. Look at the ghostly creeper there, holding



out its great, dead-white moons of blossom to beautify the owl's day. The natives in the south of India have a legend—the Legend of the Moonflower. There was once, they say, a maiden; exceedingly beautiful and modest as she was beautiful. To her the admiration of men was a sorrow from morning to night, and her life was made weary with the importunities of her lovers. From her parents she could get no help, for they only said—"Choose one of them for your husband, and you will be left alone by the others." From her friends she got less, for the men called her heartless, and the women said her coyness would be abandoned before a suitor wealthier than her village wooers. But how could they know that one evening, soft and cool, as the maiden sate at her father's porch, and there were no eyes near but the little owls' on the roof and the fire-flies' under the tamarinds, there had come out from the guava-trees a stranger youth who had wooed her and won her, and who, with a kiss on her fair up-turned face, had sealed the covenant of their love? But she knew it; and sitting, when the evenings were soft and cool, at her father's porch, she waited for the stranger's return. But he never came back; and her life, sorely vexed by her lovers, became a burden to her, and she prayed for help to the gods. And they, in their pity for her, turned her into the great white convolvulus which, clinging to her father's porch, still waits in the evenings with up-turned face for the truant's kiss. But other people

think they look like cheese-plates. At all events, they are not, according to English tastes, the fit blossom of Christmas time. But then English tastes are not fit for Christmas time in India. The season of frost and ice and snow suggests to us fires, furs, red-petticoats, and mulled port-wine; reminds us of skating on ice-covered ponds and dancing in holly-bright rooms. The Christmas bills are a skeleton to some; but even with the butcher, the baker, and grocer dancing a cannibalic war dance at the area-gate, there is hardly a home where Christmas is not "merry," and Hans Andersen's sexton who struck the boy for laughing on Christmas Eve, is considered a prodigy of infamy. But "the cold weather," as we are pleased to call the months at the end and beginning of the year, does not suggest mirthfulness to our Aryan brother: it shrivels him up. Months ago, when the sun was killing the life within us, the lizards lay happily basking on the hot stones, the coppery Danaïs flitted at ease about the shrubs above which the air of midday stood shimmering and tremulous with heat, and our Aryan brothers, stretched in the shade of tree and wall, were content with God's earth. But now that the crisp morning air lends vigour to English limbs, making home intolerable and a wild out-door life a necessity, the lizard has shrunk into a crack of the wall, the Danaïs is hibernating, and our Aryan brother creeps about his daily avocations with the desiccated appearance of a frozen frog, or sits in dormouse torpidity with his knees about his

ears. The revenge of the Briton is delicious to him, and in the cold weather he triumphs over the Aryan brother who in May and June was rustling comfortably in gauze and muslin. The morning ride or walk when the air is keen is to him (*pace* Charles Lamb) as a passage of the Red Sea, every native an Egyptian, and he laughs, like King Olaf at the thin beggar, to see the wretched Hindoo, robbing his spare legs to protect his head, pass by silent with the misery of cold. At night he finds them curled into inconceivable spaces under their blankets—and such blankets! a network of rough strings with hairs stretching across the interstices, the very ghosts of blankets at which Witney would hold its woolly sides with laughter. And with many-folded cloths round his benumbed head, over all the blanket, the Hindoo walks deaf under your horse's nose, stands before your buggy-wheels like a frost-bitten paddy-bird. The Tamils call the paddy-bird "the blind idiot." On a December morning the pompous chuprassie has no more self-respect than a hill sheep,\* and a child may play with a constable as men handle a hybernating cobra. The fat bunyas are no more seen lolling beneath their shamecanas; the Hindoo, in short, is "occultated."

---

\* A flock of hill sheep will meet at a corner of the zigzag path a humble tattoo, and the leader of them will turn aside. Soon the woolly tribe are in headlong flight down the steep hill side, and the tattoo, astonished at his own importance, passes on in sole possession of the scanty way.

In the shop yonder where earthen vessels are sold—a shilling would buy the whole stock-in-trade—with the walls festooned with chalky-surfaced chillums, the floor piled high with clay pots, sits the owner frozen and voluminously swathed. He is not proud of his shop: there is none of the assumption of the thriving merchant about him. He is too cold to concern himself about his wares, for when his neighbours want pots they will, he knows, come to him; if they do not want pots, advertisements and invitations are thrown away. Shouting is a mere waste of carbon. So he spends his mornings perched on the edge of his threshold, polishing his chattering teeth with a stick, and rinsing his mouth from the brass lotah beside him. In the next house there are no wares to sell, but in the centre, on a rag of carpet, sits a puffy man painting, with much facial contortions, and frequent applications of his numbed fingers to the charcoal burning near him, the face of a mud monkey-god. By his side are ranged rows of similar monkey-gods awaiting their turn of the brush that shall tip their heads with scarlet and their tails with yellow. Before the door sits a careful mother scouring her daughter's head with mud. Here two shivering baboos shiny with patent leather as to their feet, with oil as to their heads, and with many folds of a gaudy comforter about their necks, are climbing cautiously into an ekka, a pariah dog half awake watching the operation with a dubious wagging of its tail. One and all are extinguished, suppressed, occultated, by the cold.

Have you ever seen a planet "occultated?" It is a very solemn sight, to see with the naked eye a great world in visible motion. Clear upon the dark blue night shines the crescent moon, a mere sickle of silver upon a blue-black field of sky; close to her, with a strange brilliance, glitters the presumptuous Venus ever and again sending out a bright ray. There is to be a struggle for the supremacy of this Christmas night, and slowly the rivals approach, the moon paling beside the unwonted lustre of the planet. But the struggle is unequal. The calm, pale moon, conscious of latent beauty, sails on, while the eager, flashing star, with artifices of light, gathers her strength for the effort. And now they are almost touching—the mellow crescent of the moon surmounted by the sparkling star—and victory seems for a moment with Venus. In the next she is gone, and the moon is lying on the sky alone!



# Among the Crops.

---

AMONG THE CROPS.

THE SPARROW.

THE WOLF.

THE JACKALS.

SUDHOO.

BUGGOO, THE CHOWKEYDAR.

THE GNOME OF THE HILLOCK.

## AMONG THE CROPS.

---

It is noteworthy that in praising the beauties of English landscape we, perhaps unconsciously, keep close to our mind's eye the commoner and less picturesque types. The memory when recalling England goes back with complacency to the simpler charms of cottage and corn-field, river and meadow, park and woodland. Few can remember easily any misty pine-clad mountains, broad levels of green fen or purple heather, or cliffs where the pied sea-birds cluster; but it costs none of us an effort to remember the scenery of half our shires—the undulating grass land, broken only by hedgerows, farms and copses; the green lanes and brooks: here a stretch of corn-field, there a patch of preserve, and, dotted over the whole, trees, white cottage walls, and church spires. A clear sunlight—bright but not hot—lies upon the land, whitening the sheep on the slope, the shirts of the reapers in the fields, the cattle beneath the pollard willows which mark the course of the flowing brook. These little things are the real charms of English scenery. We boast (to use language of the “Bird-o-freedom Soaring” type) no frantic rivers bursting through granite

gorges and plunging themselves in mist and thunder into black abysses, no eternal snows with the proverbial eagle, or oceans of Savannah flecked with bison herds. We have mossy banks and beds of primroses, beech-tree avenues and squirrels, instead of glaciers, cataracts, volcanoes, and gorillas. Perhaps the grapes are sour, but somehow we are satisfied to boast of the cosy, happy scenery of England as if it were very beautiful, and many of us really believe it to be so. We confess to finding much that is very grateful in full corn-fields, and a real charm, though of a quiet and placid kind, in a reach of meadowland.

The beauty of crops is not chiefly one of colour; its appeal to the eye is largely through the mind, and therefrom perhaps more pleasing; but this is only of our English crops. The crops of India are beautiful in themselves. The dark, close-growing pulses, with their yellow 'broom'-like blossom; the tall broad-leaved grain crops which in a month shoot up from a pallid vernal green to autumnal yellows, browns, and scarlets; the sugarcane and the handsome castor-oil plant, vary the rustic scenery, and are themselves beautiful. Their appearance, the artistic contrast of colour, the strange foliage, strike us as we pass; but when we leave the country we shall remember not the corn-fields or pastures, the village or suburban scenery, but the Himalayas or the Neilgherries, great rivers, great rocks, and great jungle gorges. We shall seldom recall the



broad fields of cotton, luxuriant tobacco, or white-flowered poppy ; the gram fields whence the clamorous jackals sweep at nightfall, the tall jowar with the raised platforms in the midst whereon the small-voiced native squatting tries to scare the lusty parrots ; the bujra which the sparrows love, and of which, by all the brutality of a majority, they possess themselves.

---

### THE SPARROW.

SEE them now. The lean-limbed watchman may clatter his bird-scare, may lift up his voice in remonstrance from dewy morn to dewy eve, but he will not turn the multitudinous sparrow from the evil tenour of his way. It is Emile Souvestre who calls the sparrow "the nightingale of the roofs," and says that "our chimney pots are his forests, and our slates his grass plots," but I incline to take a less lenient view of the genus *Passer* than does the kindly essayist. As we resent the likeness to ourselves which the monkey tribes possess, so we feel injured by the familiar communism of the sparrow. He professes, though in another arc, to move on the same plane with man—our chimney pots are his chimney pots, and our slates his slates, but our forests and grass plots are none the less his also. There is, in his deportment, none of the deference of a stranger when he crosses your threshold—the conscious humility of an interloper. His entry is that of a conqueror into a hostile city or of a king into another's palace.

He begins by putting himself on an equality with you, but soon arrogates superiority. He is Darwinian and holds that man by natural selection will develop into the sparrow, but in his present hybrid stage criticizes him as the fool who builds houses for the wise (sparrow) to live in. Show me a man's house and I will show you a sparrow's castle—point out if you can a stable which the sparrow does not share with the horses. *Vos non vobis nidificatis* he chirps—and points the quotation by hopping with dirty feet across your verandah. He is the gamin of birds—chief vagabond of the air. He it is who mocks the illustrious stranger, jay, or owl, crowds without payment into places of public amusement, disturbs divine service by a fracas with his kind on the altar rails, or, irreverent fowl, perches above the Ten Commandments and chirps monotonously through the sermon. His cranial development is very poor—flat atop, showing a deplorable lack of respect; bulgy behind, typical of gross amativeness and gluttony; and puffy at the sides, where lodge the devils of destructiveness, evil speaking, lying, and slandering. This Bohemian communist has broken through—worn out—the resentment of man; he no longer resist his intrusions or retaliate for his rapine. He has acquired a prescriptive right to be iniquitous and go unpunished. But he does not understand this. In his conceit he insolently imagines that he has compelled acquiescence and treats us as a conquered race. He takes alms by force, making charity a military requisition; and

to quote Aurifaber's preface to one of Luther's works, "his gorged paunch is puffed up with uncivil pride." In another world he will be met with strolling in the valley of Jehoshaphat flower in hand—the badge of one who has benefited his fellow-man—will swagger through the fields of amaranth and moly, and take to himself more than his share of asphodel.

---

### THE WOLF.

As the sparrow possesses himself of the corn-fields by day, so do the jackals and the wolf by night. In all their excursions these brigands start from the cover of some high standing crop, returning to them when morning endangers or when sudden alarm prompts to precipitate flight. Here now may be lurking the were-wolf, the Ishmael of the pack, who while its kindred are swinging at a gallop—so leisurely it seems, but leaving the horse and his rider far behind—across the dark-shadowed ravines and through the black crops that lie like clouds upon the moonlit country, here pulling down a bewildered antelope, there flashing upon some feeble sheepfold and carrying off, slung across its strong back, a speckled kid or yearling lamb—who, while its kin are fighting round some carcase in the distant jungle, boldly visits the abodes of man himself, roams in his public places and along his roads, loiters in his pleasure-

grounds, passes like a lost shadow across his croquet lawn, haunts his verandahs, perhaps even steals into his carpeted rooms.

A nurse lies sleeping on the floor, her charge asleep in her arms. The wolf listens. He can hear slumbrous voices mumbling beneath the porch, can hear the guttural hookah answering to the long-drawn breath of the smoker, can smell the sick scent of the tobacco. The wolf, his grey coat hardly showing against the matting, lies down beside the sleeping pair and pauses. A house-dog far away is answering defiantly the maniac jackals sweeping past him in full cry. Then the wolf bends his furred head and with his thick warm tongue licks the baby out of its nurse's arms. The poor woman feels the gentle warmth, unconsciously presses the baby closer for a moment, but her grasp begins to relax. The moist soft touch of the wild beast's tongue, its bated breath, melt her fingers open. One by one they loosen their guardian hold, the wrists sink apart, and gently from her bosom the baby slides back against the soft coat of the crouching wolf. It does not wake : the wolf rises. The house is still ; drowsy voices are still mumbling. The house dog has lain down self-satisfied, for the jackals have passed by. The baby is lying on the ground. Again the furred head, the eyes sparkling, is bent down, a sudden snap !—and the cruel teeth have closed in the baby's throat. A feeble cry, and the nurse springs up to hear the rustle of swift feet across the matting, to feel

her feet slip in the blood at her side. The terrible truth flashes upon her, and at her cry the house is up. But the wolf and the baby are gone. The house-dog wonders if that was really something which passed between him and the garden wall—thinks not—growls angrily, and turns to sleep. But ask the owl sitting on the vinery what it sees, that it turns its head over its back. Ask the wheeling bats. They will tell you that a wolf has just passed beneath them carrying across its back a little child, and that it has leaped the aloe hedge and is gone into that black grain crop beyond. The mother may weep, the servants chatter and the father search, but the baby is gone. The wolf is with it, lying again by its side, but its touch is now rough and cruel, its breath is short drawn and fierce, for the wolf is hungry and the children of men are dainty food.

Next harvest a little skull will perhaps be found in the corner of the field under that *babool* bush—if the jackals have not already rolled it back to its father's door.

---

### THE JACKALS.

THE jackal is the bug, the green parrot, among mammals. He has a use, I presume, for everything, they say, was created for a purpose, but it is not an easy one to guess. Muskrats were made, I know, to eat cockroaches, and very well they understand their *raison d'être*; spiders for the suppression of blue-bottles; mos-

quitoes for (in their larva state) the purification of standing water, and, in their winged state, to teach man humility and to give an impulse to the manufacture of bed curtains. These are all evident, but why were jackals created? To eat refuse. Then what is the use of the vulture, the kite, the pariah dog, and the multitude of necrophagous beetles? That jackals do not eat much refuse, or much anything, is evident from their chronic famine. Catch a jackal at any time, and he is hungry. Open his criminal stomach, and what are its contents?—the better part of a young curry-fowl and a pair of kid gloves. Now neither of these were “refuse.” His own bowels witness against him. The deceased found the chicken shut out by accident from the hen-house, and the kid gloves he picked up at a door in the verandah. It is evident that jackals were not created for the puposes of scavengoring, for though they certainly do, when occasion offers, spend a jovial night over a carcase, the carrion birds would have done the job as well, as quickly, and more quietly, when morning broke, so that at best the jackal is a superfluity, an appendix, a supplement. But he does not admit this. He arrogates to himself a definite mission on earth, and would have himself recognized a complete ego. And he succeeds so far, in that he renders it impossible for us to ignore his existence. Nobody is afraid of him except Sweet Seventeen and the cat; but everybody loathes him. With a crash of sudden sound the pack shatter the crystal silence of the summer’s

night, shivering the star-lit stillness into pieces, splashing, scattering their demoniac babel round them, each throat a fiend's, each fiend double-throated.

I confess to a lofty dislike of the jackal, but he has a grim and dirty humour which sits well upon him. He is always the first to tell us of his presence, bursting out pleasantly in an explosion of discord from, it seems, under the chair on which we are dozing through our night-cap pipe—just when we were moralizing, maudlin, over Nature “hushed in fond repose,” or listening, sentimental, as the “trailing garments of the Night sweep through her marble halls.” We had almost forgotten India, quite forgotten the jackal, when it loosed upon us that swarm of noises. A jackal, I take it, has a wider gamut than any beast, bird, fowl, fish, or instrument since Paganini's fiddle. Let the Howling Monkey brag of his *os hyoides* and fright his native forests with his awful utterances, or the Mocking Bird mimic in a breath the voice of all creation, the jackal is their master. With one simple tongue—no *os hyoides*, no powers of mimicry—he will let you have, from his own proper throat, such a variety of hideous sounds, that were he long-winded you should curse your gods. But our burdens are meted out to us according to the width of our backs, and quick-tongued humanity has been spared this crime of blasphemy by the short wind given to jackals. Not that they cannot run for leagues or be worried by dogs till they are as limp as sodden leather and afterwards revive, but they cannot long use

both legs and tongue together. Hear them now as they pass in full cry through that *urhur* crop. The first crash, as of brass bands bedevilled, is over; one brute tries to rekindle the foul riot, but only gets up a duet, his breath fails—the solo lasts a minute longer—a few snaps, groans, and yells, and the corn-field is as silent as ever: the jackal pack has swept by. These ghastly jesters have another jibe, one which they never tire of playing off. It is to roll bones into your presence. Stuck fast in the muddy bed of a distant nullah is the skeleton of a sheep. Times are hard, watch-dogs are on the alert, and the jackals re-visit the well-picked bones. The skull is dragged out, mumbled across half a field, fought over for another hundred yards, and in the end pleasantly deposited at your bath-room door.

### SUDHOO.

THERE, beneath the two jujube trees in the corner of the field, stands Sudhoo's cottage. Its walls are not so strong as those the beaver builds, nor so high as the ant-hills of Peru, but it is nevertheless the abode of man—and of a man who has a story to his life. Before the door stands the architect and owner, Sudhoo, the stalwart, and this is his story.

One day there came by, on an ambling pony, a many-folded blanket for a saddle, a fat and bare-limbed money-lender, who stopped before the cottage door and called out for his money. "I have none," said the stalwart



Sudhoo, "but my cow will calve next week." The rich man turned his creased back towards the mud-walled cottage, and went off between the high green wall of the dal crop, threatening with much perspiration and blasphemy the peasant with the law. And Sudhoo wondered for a moment whether it could be the will of his gods that he should be insulted thus, and his mind was soon made up. His gods could not wish it—was not his cow going to calve soon?—so he strode after the fat money-lender. But before he went he took from its place, where it leant against the wall, the long bamboo which, when a lad, he had cut from before the house—the clump was then a bush, and this the longest shoot upon it; but now an ample tope waved high above his cottage. Then he tightened his waistband and strode after the fat money-lender. Between the green walls of the dal crop he came up with him. "Wait for your money till my cow calves!" he cried. The other sneered, and shook his head, and then—thwack! across the creasy back came the long bamboo. "There's your interest! Go to the court and say it was I who paid you," said Sudhoo, with a great laugh, to the man of money as he lay roaring among the dal, and he strode back to his cottage. His pipe was filled, and he sate beneath the jujube trees, staring across the corn-fields to where in the far distance shone white the walls of the Englishman's court-house, whence at nightfall he would hear Buggoo

shouting, and whence evil for him would come he knew on the morrow, and he smoked on and wondered that his gods should wish him evil. And the evil came, and the peasant was sent to prison. But before he went he turned to his wife—"Wife of Sudhoo, water the melon-patch till I come back and take care of the cow. See that Buggoo does not steal the milk."

A river and many long miles of corn-land, much brick and mortar, lay between him and his mud-walled cottage beneath the jujube trees. But his heart was there, and in the early morning he thought of his wife, alone, pulling up water from the deep well, and he watched the thin stream trickling across the dry ground, and then he remembered—his cow. Was the calf born? Would that Buggoo steal the milk? And in the evening he remembered his pleasant hookah, his wife cooking his spiced meal, and the clear moonlight; and as he thought of them he waxed very angry, and said to himself, "I will go and see if the calf is born." So he rose, struck his feeble fetters against the stone bench, with the larger fragment forced back the bolt of his door, strode out into the prison-yard, felled the knock-kneed warder, climbed the foolish wall, and before the warder had picked up his turban, was running like a quail through the close-growing stems of the high crops—here cowering along the edge of a garden, there leaping a water-course, but straight as the evening bee hive-ward went Sudhoo home.

The moon is shining, two little owls are chuckling

consumedly as he passes to his house, a woman's voice is humming a long tune on one note, when suddenly a stalwart figure strides out from the black shade of the grain crop. The owls tumble away into the night air with a horrified cluck, the humming ceases, and a man's voice says—"Wife of Sudhoo, has the cow calved?" "No," she said—"it may to-morrow." And his pipe was filled and he smoked on till his wife was asleep. Then he rose, drew the water from the well till he had filled all the trenches,—“she will have little work to-morrow,”—and as the day was breaking he ate his meal, and with his blanket went out into the dal field, stretched out his great limbs, and was fast asleep, while the officers of the law came to his house and sought him. And so time passed—while he smoked his wife sang to him, and while she slept he worked, through the day lying hid in the thick dal crop. At last the cow calved and Sudhoo saw the little stranger into the world, and a few nights afterwards he and his wife went off between those green walls which had seen the money-lender smitten from his thin-legged tattoo, and sold the cow and calf; and while he sent his wife with the money to pay the fat money-lender, he went himself back to the prison beyond the river. He climbed back over the foolish wall, spoke kindly to the knock-kneed warder who would have fled from him, strode through the prison-yard, and sate him down in his cell. “Tell the jailer that Sudhoo has come back.” “Why,” asked the Eng-

lishman, "did you break away, and why, after you had escaped so well, did you come back?" Then made answer the stalwart Sudhoo—"I went to be with my cow while she calved, and now that the calf is born I have come back." And the story was told and heard, and, for his debt was paid, the Englishmen who honor a doughty deed, let him from his prison, and the stalwart Sudhoo strode home in the day-light to his mud-walled house beneath the jujube trees.

---

### BUGGOO, THE CHOWKEYDAR.\*

AND who was Buggoo? Buggoo was a chowkeydar, and Sudhoo's neighbour. That wigwam is Buggoo's house; his wants are very few. Besides, he seldom sees his house by daylight—the crank walls and the latticed roof look well enough by night; so Buggoo is contented with his house, and as he sallies forth to his work, he sings a hideous refrain at the pitch of his voice, answering cheerily the owls. The chowkeydar is an animal *sui generis*, and the one only species of his genus. The family has but a single order—chowkeydars—and besides them there is no other, neither any varieties. His childhood is a tradition. Perhaps in early youth he was a pea-boy, and so acquired a taste for grotesque shouting; but it is more reasonable to suppose that he never was a boy. He was born adult. He exists by night, and his days are divided into moonlight and pitchy dark-

---

The night-watchman.

ness. For one-half his life he has no shadow. He knows of the sun, but is not intimate with it; the constellations he is familiar with, taking his time from the rise and decline of the Hesperids or Orion. For the periods of his working hours Nature has provided him a chronometer. If when he comes to his work the bats are still fluttering in and out the rafters, he says, "I am up betimes, 'tis early"; the Great Bear is aslope, and he says "The day's work is half over"; and when the jackal cries the third time at the break of dawn he says, "I feel sleepy, night approaches." And in this he cuts himself off from his kind, sets himself apart from humanity, in that at early morn he goes yawning home like the beasts of the forest and not forth to his work like the sons of men. He knows what the sun is like—to see a festival he has sat' up the live-long day. Besides, he has heard from his priests how every morning the great cyclops King of Day sends out before him his sunbeams to remove the night stains from the skies and paint them for his proper reception, and how sometimes the sunbeams are lazy, so that the great King, when he comes, finds his domed audience-hall not hung with crimson and gold, but gloomy and grey, and that then in anger the passionate old monarch veils his face, his great eye looks dimly down through tears of anger, he sighs in wind and sobs in thunder. How, when the sunbeams work their hardest, the grand old King is right royal, and in a flood of painted glory the Day appears



before the up-gazing world, the Order of the Rainbow across his breast. More than this Buggoo does not know. Bats are his sparrows and moths his flies: an afternoon is as secret from him as the Feast of Fatima or the system of computation by quaternions, and of the sun at mid-day he speaks as we speak of the Southern Cross. He holds it his duty to sleep all day, because he has been up all night, though he sleeps all night to shirk his duty. Now and again he wakes up and clears his throat to let the world know it, or yells in answer to some distant friend; but he does little more. When he comes first he seizes his iron-shod club of office, and striking it as he goes against the dull ground makes the circuit of the house. Beneath the porch he loiters with the servant who is sitting up to see his master home—saunters round the corner, and as he passes each bed-room door startles the night with an unearthly cry, putting the jackals to shame, or breaks off suddenly in the middle to choke in a re-assuring manner. He then coughs defiantly, hiccups, and passes on—tramp! tramp! “And Beauty sate in the hall waiting for him, and at last she heard him coming, tramp! tramp! striking his club upon the ground, and suddenly round the corner came—the Beast.” The chowkeydar meanwhile has reached his blanket stretched out in a sheltered place, has scared away the cat which had taken possession of it, and is asleep.

## THE GNOME OF THE HILLOCK; OR, HATCHET HEADS OF THE COPPER AGE.

BUGGOO's daughter is married to Madhoo the second cousin of the nephew of the other Madhoo whose sister-in-law was the wife of the villager Anúp—the Anúp who was killed by the Gnome of the Hillock.

Beside the hillock, round which when young he had often played, upon which in the infantine mimicry of piety he had years before built him a little obelisk to the god Mahadeo, and over which in a fine cloud of tempered green the old tamarind planted by an ancestor hung its boughs, the villager Anúp was ploughing up the tough ground. He had for half his lifetime been fighting a mysterious law-suit which his grandfather had begun, and which,—his adversaries through three generations having died out, and the papers relating to it having all been destroyed in the memorable year of the Sipahis' revolt,—he had won at last. Perhaps the curly-headed youth who had come to the village to decide the case, bringing with him a little dog,—harmless-looking, bow-legged, and of a whitish colour, but which during the half-hour it stayed in the village had found time to kill Anúp's great pariah cur,—knew little about the matter. Perhaps Anúp was in the right. At all events, there he was in that hot May day driving his plough through the long-disputed patch of ground. When the sun was

straight above him, and his shadow had fallen about his feet, Anúp bethought him of his midday pulse, his tobacco and siesta ; so he unyoked his languid oxen, turned his plough upside down, and went towards the tamarind tree.

Ha ! why does he turn his head to the hillock ? What does he see ? There is something glittering on the hillock's side. In a moment the old man is kneeling at the hillock, and with a sharp stone digging out the metal. Can it be *gold* ? Gold it surely is ! some pounds of it, and beaten into a hatchot shape. Could the stories of his village then be true ? Was this hillock in truth the dwelling-place of the gnome Jubandwip ? Was it a huge dumpling of jewels with just a paste of turf ? Anúp thought no longer of sleeping, but sat down, trying to settle in his fat village mind how he should craftily outwit the Gnome of the Hillock. He sat wondering and looking at the lump of metal in his hand, until the sun went down, and his oxen, bewildered at the unwonted holiday that had been thrust upon them, began to think of their evening measure of chaff, and turning towards Anúp's village, browsed their way homeward. But Anúp was not thinking of his supper or of his oxen. He had grown rich—was the mahajun of his village : lent out money at high interest to his fellows : had bought half a zemindaree in a year of dearth ; rode about in a comfortable palanquin ; his name was " Babu Anúpjee," and his house flowed with ghee and butter-milk. So he sat dreaming. But where was the money wherewith to do this—the wand to transform the scene ? True, he



had a handsome lump in his hand, but this was not sufficient to build all the castles he had planned, to buy the zemindaree, and to flood his house with butter-milk and ghee. Where was the rest? *In the hillock there, ten yards from him.*

And as he looked at it, he almost thought he saw the luminous gold burning in a yellow shimmer through the cracks of the grey mould and between the roots of the brown turf, and Anúp could bear waiting no longer. So he ran to the hillock, and with his hands began pulling down the protruding lumps, and either hand, where it touched the hillock, rested on a chill surface, and with either hand he drew out a lump of gold. Was he bewitched? Wherever he put his hand, gold came up to meet the palm, and he had only to close his fingers to draw out the rich wedges. But soon the weight of his treasure warned Anúp that if he would not have his secret known, he must hide what he had already got and return for more on the morrow. Hark! a cry—the light of lanterns—“Anúp! Anúp!” The villagers had seen the bullocks come home alone, and thinking that a tiger had carried off their master, his heirs were coming out to find him. “Anúp! Anúp!” The villager got up, twisted two or three nuggets into his waist-cloth, and shouting in reply was soon the centre of a circle of sympathetic friends. “He had fallen asleep: his oxen had gone off: the cries of his good friends had awakened him: he thanked them; he was quite well, a little rheumatic perhaps; there was no tiger in the case.”

And so he got home with his secret kept, and when the evening meal was over—his fellows wondered that he refused to join the social hubble-bubble—he went into his dark hovel and fingered his gold. And as he caressed it, he remembered with fear the other wedges lying uncared for at the hillock's foot. After long thinking he crept out of his village. The whole country was asleep, except where, half a mile off, a fire was fitfully gleaming. The voice of the chowkeydar indulging in a harmless song came towards him, broken only by the yelping of village curs and the clamour of the wild geese passing a mile overhead. There was no moon as Anúp stole along. What a start those jackals gave him! Were the ill-omened beasts of carrion calling to him to go back! Tumbling through the air above him came an owl, surely warning him from the hillock. A great bat wheeled round his head! But Anúp stumbled along and reached the hillock at last. From the tamarind tree above him rustled out some night-fowl, and Anúp, his hair bristling on his head, listened to its wild cry till it died away in the dark distance, before he felt the courage in him to approach the gnome's thesauron. And just as he had made up his mind to go up to the hillock, and had moved out from beneath the tamarind tree, he felt the earth tremble below him. And lo! the hillock burst open, and from the gleaming rent poured out a stream of molten gold. And from the rippling metal sprang a royal tiger, a noble beast with red-hot

eyes, great claws and fangs of flame, and his whole skin lambent with a phosphorous lustre, on which, like the scars of old burns, showed out his hundred stripes. And on the tiger's back sat the outraged Gnome of the Hillock, the very terrible Jubandwip.

And Anúp knew him ; a thousand legends told of his coal-black face, white eyes, and teeth as long and large as a man's arm, of his dank red hair and his feet that grasped like hands. It was indeed the Gnome of the Hillock, and he spoke in a voice like an elephant's trumpeting—"You have disturbed me from my rest : you have robbed me of my gold." Then there was silence. Only the tiger's deep breathing, the pulses of the throbbing earth, and the hissing of the hot gold. Then Anúp, trembling, offered to go home and bring the fatal treasure back, to leave that village for ever, and to tell the gnome's secret to no man. "Was not the gnome his god, and he poor Anúp, a ploughman?" But Jubandwip would have none of the dross : and cried out :—"You may keep the gold : four hairs from your knee is the price I ask." But Anúp would not sell himself to the devil, and refused. Again the gnome thundered out his words, and again Anúp whispered a faint refusal. And lo ! on a sudden the molten gold was rolled back like a carpet upon itself, enfolded the tiger and its terrible rider, and, crumpling up, was gathered again into the hillock, whose two sides closed with a tremendous sound that shook the ground again. But in the midst of the great

sound Anúp heard clearly the word "BEWARE!" and all the wakened hillsides heard it, and shouted it to each other again and again, until in the distance the sound died away—"BEWARE—BE—WARE—WARE"

Next day Anúp was found lying in his hovel nearly dead, and for many days it was thought he could not live. And when he woke up to life he was blind and deaf. What was life to him? He would go back to the hillock and sell himself to Jubandwip. Better be rich and well, the slave of a devil, than a blind pauper. So he asked his fellows to yoke his plough for him and take him to the patch of ground by the hillock near the tamarind tree. So they took him, and standing apart saw the blind man guiding his plough hither and thither. The bullocks, fat with no work, pulled to one side and the other; but the poor villager could not guide them, and the children among the by-standers laughed at the old man ploughing in a circle, and lashing the empty air with his stick. And on a sudden, while all were watching the zig-zag furrows, the plough grazed the hillock, and with an angry snap broke off short! The bullocks, released from their weight, scampered hither and thither. A tuft of green herbage hung from the hillock side, and they stretched up their yoked necks to crop it. Those watching saw the weed pulled down towards their mouths, when suddenly the beasts together fell forward, their foreheads resting on the hillock. Anúp, feeling with his hands, came up to them. But what use a goad to drive

on dead bullocks? Then Anúp put out his hand to the hillock, and below his fingers he felt the chill touch of gold, and as if he had touched a serpent he sprang back—"Jubandwip! Jubandwip!" The villagers standing round heard the shout, and screaming "Jubandwip! Jubandwip!" fled to the village—leaving the old cripple by his bullocks. And the day wore on. The villagers crept back in twos and threes, and from a distance watched him. He was praying to the gnome, but they could not hear his words. He was kneeling and taking something from his knee. And then they saw him rise, and, as if he had his eyes, he walked, unconscious of their presence, muttering through their midst as they shrunk back to give him way, straight to his own hovel. At the door he paused, calling to his little nephew. "Tota! Tota!" and an urchin came running to him. The old man took the child's hand and led him back; the villagers, who had crowded round, making way for the couple and following in a whispering, frightened pack at his heels—old people and young; men forgetting their work, women their face-cloths, children their play. And Anúp reached his field—the bullocks like gray marble figures knelt before the hillock, their foreheads resting against the turf, the broken plough lay by them—and neared the awful mound. The curious villagers, pressing from behind, stood closer, and they heard the blind Anúp invoke the gnome—"Jubandwip! Lord, I pay the price: I have brought him";—and the little child, sobbing with

fear, was lifted with one hand by the old man, while with the other he felt the air before him towards the hillock. All the villagers stood round horror-stricken open-eyed, open-mouthed, silent as a company of the dead. Anúp had reached the hillock, and raising the child with both hands he placed it on the top. There was a little scream—and then the child lay quiet.

The vultures were gathering in the sky. Already round the hillock and the kneeling kine swooped the carrion kites. Anúp was rubbing his eyes, putting his fingers in his ears. Did he see the dead child? Could he hear the scream of the carrion kites? No; for the gnome was mocking him, and he cried out "Jubandwip! lord, I have paid the price: thou hast him, and yet I am blind. Jubandwip, my lord, Oh Jubandwip! I am still blind—blind." But there came no answer, and all the villagers, horror-stricken and sick, turned away, creeping homeward one behind the other. One who turned to look at the cripple by the hillock saw that round him were sweeping and hovering a cloud of hungry birds, while ever and again came the piteous cry across the fields—"I am still blind, oh Jubandwip! my lord, I am still blind!"

And some hours after, as the evening was greying, the young men of the village, with the daring of ignorance in them, crept towards the field, and climbing up the bank, parted the tussocks of sword-grass that grew like a mane along it, and peered through at the hillock.

But where are the bullocks—the child—the old man ? Ask that jackal dragging something under the tamarind tree. No need to ask.

Months after the Government officers came to the village to learn the truth. And the young curley-headed Englishman, with his dog behind him, went into Anúp's hovel—no one had dared to enter it—and in it he found some wedges of metal. " Hatchet-heads," he called them, " of the Copper Age."



## Miscellaneous.

---

THE FAQUEER.

A NATIVE GARDEN.

THE SYCE'S CHILDREN.

THE HARI-KIRI.

THE FROGS.

OF TAILORS.

GAMINS.

NATIONAL SMELLS.

THE NATIVE CONSTABLE.

MOSQUITOES.

FROM THE RAW TO THE ROTTEN.

ISTE PUER.

FROM ALLAHABAD TO NYNEE TAL.

DEATH, THE DAUGHTER OF MERCY.

RAILWAY TRAVELLING.



## MISCELLANEOUS.

---

### THE FAQUEER.

ONE of the phenomena of India which on my first landing amused me greatly was the Faqueer; and my amusement has not even now staled into indifference towards him. Indeed, to me, who am in no way put to discomfort by them, the faqueers seem entitled to receive from us some of that respect which in spendthrift ignorance the natives so lavishly spend on them. Not like Crysalis inviting reverence by the proud splendour of his robes, but by the humility of nakedness commanding it, the faqueer holds in awe the starveling poor. His old rags are his regalia, his filth an ermine more honoured than the bee-sprent mantle of the Napoleons. Cleaving to his ancient staff, as Luther clung to his tattered psalter, the faqueer stakes his fortunes upon the poverty of his appointments. And in a country where gorgeousness of apparel marks out the wearer as one to whom honour is due, the mean trappings of the man of God forcibly appeal to the popular superstition. His tithes are collected without dispute; his cheques upon Heaven discounted on

earth without murmuring. Clearing for himself a spot by a frequented road, he seats himself, and by the very grimness of his presence compels respect from the passers-by, who, the ignorant of them, invest him with all the traditional glories of the great ascetics of story, and from their own scanty store give in alms to the old man whose age and helpless misery they can see, and whose virtue they cannot disprove. To the robust temperament of Europeans the mumping hypocrisies of faqueers, their ostentatious display of wretchedness and deformity, their cruel power over the very poor, are causes for regret; but the natives take highground when they assert their right to believe in the ultimate harvest to be reaped from charities sown at random along the roads of life. To us it all seems degrading, and we wonder at them much as we would have wondered at the strange people of Menantra who worshipped the Southern Cross, and paid with their shell-currency for slabs of blue sleep. Yet in a useless way it is pleasant to pretend to admire credulity, for superstitions were the earliest outcome of reason, the *primitiæ*, the first products of a simple humanity cursed by the absence of history, aching for a Past, for something to believe in, and thus prompted by only natural and beautiful aspirations they cannot be altogether unworthy of admiration. When the Chinese hold up, for the example of youth, the fabled glories of Yu the Great or the virtuous splendour of the mother of Shangte, we respect the motive; and if the faqeer, openly professing to be in his own person

an exemplar of the self-denying recluses of old, a concrete expression of the abstract virtue of self-denial, holds himself out to public notice as a living warning against the vanities of life, should we altogether protest against him? It is well to be reminded that Heaven is not only for the successful—well even for the wretched peasant who has neither love for the Past nor pleasure in the Present, to have some hope in the Future. And if he believes the hideous mendicant when he says that he has the powers of a St. Patrick or St. Christopher; that the calf he brings with him tricked out with cowries, possesses within its silly head the rain-compelling Yedh; and in that belief gives him a handful of dry grains, let him, in God's name, give it. He is, after all, not much worse in doing so, than those who, innocent of all superstition, recognise bodily misery and do not relieve it.

It was a faqueer, the dirtiest of his kind, that led me to discover that there was poetry of a sort in cutting one's throat. He was a laboriously dirty man, for where others of the brigade had only a layer of dust upon their heads, he had a little mound: the unkempt locks of his comrades were on him replaced by ropes, matted with horrid cosmetics into the hair and hanging down to his knees. His body was grey as a squirrel's tail with a pigment of dust laid on with some viscous matter: the ribs on either side stood out from the daubing of ochre laid in the hollows between each. Small in size, and of unparalleled leanness, this incarnation of dirt had

attracted my attention. It was the day of a great fair held at the junction of two holy rivers, and I was making purchases of some curiosities at a stall, haggling over cornelian marbles, agate beads, and absurd alabaster monkey-gods and goddesses with very rounded limbs and silly faces, when this faqueer came sauntering up. While I was watching him he lifted a little Mahadeo off the stall, and from his own head reverentially transferred a wafer of Ganges mud to the occiput of the idol. Then leisurely turning round, he picked his way through the holy-water bottles exposed for sale upon the sand, as carefully as a Chinaman picks his way across a floor that is strewn with papers,\* and approached the Sacred River. Heedless of the worshippers who, all up and down, a mile's length on either hand, fringed the river; heedless of the thousand bathers, of the shameless clamour of the Brahmans and the invocations of the crowd, the suicide stepped composedly into the water, and with even steps advanced until his long rope-matted hair was trailing in the mingling rivers. And then on a sudden a knife flashed from the waistcloth, a wild cry—that rose above all the clamour of the fair, startled the myriads into a moment of silence, and turned all eyes towards him—went up to “GUNGAGEE.” There was just a rapid, desperate motion of the arm, and the next moment under the rippling water encarnadine lay the body of the faqueer. And his soul had gone to its God. The cry was of course “the fanatical

---

\* A Chinaman will not tread wittingly on paper that has writing on it. —Z. O.

screech of a bigoted idolater about to sacrifice himself to some vile heathen deity," but nevertheless there rang through it a very human cry of ordinary pain. Perhaps the faqueer was doing what he thought his duty at the bitter price of life ; that this earth of ours had attractions even for such as him, and that serving a less bloody god he might have preferred to live.

---

### A NATIVE GARDEN.

" MAN is a noble animal, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave, solemnizing nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infamy of his nature." Three tombs, grand witnesses to an age of credulous sceptics of an old world splendid even in its graves, stand together ; and men have forgotten in whose honour they were built. The piled masonry keeps its secret, though in the still night they must surely talk of the barbaric and magnificent Past. And well for us that they speak in cypher. Round them was once spread a kingly garden, royal in size and royal in its wealth of foliage. In ranged order lined each broad road and met overhead, black-shaded mangoe trees, under which, as in cathedral cloisters, wandered long ago the worshippers of the great of old—"the dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule our spirits from their urns." In remote corners were massed dark thickets of close-blossomed, heavy-fruited

citrons. Robust shrubs of jessamine and oleander relieved in large colours the levels of green turf which were spread between. For the garden was a garden only for the ghosts of the great dead and for the reverent living, and in its appointments was stately. And now? Prim beds lie flat upon the ground, central in each a single blossomed rose—a miracle it may be of its species—while on painted supports cling cobwebs of faint exotic flowers. Small plants, with the demeanour of the well-educated stand at even distances from one another, each keeping itself to its own hole. A round pond makes two ducks indifferently happy; the squirrels exult in a new vinery stocked with choice grapes, and many a mallie grows mysteriously fat on the products of an English vegetable garden. A well-metalled road sweeps round between croquet lawns, to a band-stand made out of pickings from one of the old tombs. The same great wall, bearded with a century's growth of creepers, and tanned with a hundred years of sun, still belts the garden; but over and beyond it, the high tombs can now see slim, smooth-faced walls, red and white, the puny offspring of haste and economy, that before a single cycle of the seasons have given up the fight with Nature. Once there stood before the tombs a triad of great trees, giants of their kind and very beautiful. For in the whole world there is hardly a tree more beautiful than a tamarind of old growth. But early on one warm summer's morning the grandest of the three came down.

The massive limbs it had thrown out were more than its bole could bear, and with a great cry, like that of the stricken Titan in the poem of Endymion, the splendid vegetable fell. Came down from out the sky that grand dome of feathery green that for two centuries had grandly shaded the mausoleum of a king. What a poem might not be written on its fall! The long strange history it had survived—the whole story of England in India,—and then that morning when it fell. The old tree, bearing up bravely through the still hours under the terrible secret that, as the night wore on, became known to every, the smallest, spray upon its branches; the sympathizing night which set each trembling leaf with a tear-drop of dew; the moon coming up late and sadly with a dark cloud across her face; the wistful low-voiced wind which breathed so tenderly, for the last time caressing the foliage. "Go by, go by," spoke the tree to the sad-voiced wind, "to my brother by the Eastern Tomb, and tell him that when the sun rises to-morrow, it will shine triumphant across from space to space. I shall not be here then to hold up my deep breast against him, take all his heat, and beat off for half the day his rays from the ground behind me. For two centuries, and day after day"—and then the sudden death-shudder shot from crown to root. A momentary quiver, and lo! with a great groan the cleft trunk reeled asunder, and for a mile round they knew the old tree had fallen.

Years ago the tombs stood deep-planted in religious

groves, their presence only guessed at by the flights of pigeons wheeling round their minarets ; but to-day they are a landmark for miles round, performing the vulgar-est function of a church steeple. The same parrots nestle in the fretwork of their parapets ; the flying foxes still hang beneath the tainted eaves : from their highest peaks the craning kites scan the country round, just as they did a century ago ; and the villain sparrow, as of old in Tobit's wall, defiles the crevices with his last year's nests. But beneath how changed the scene, how changed the forms that people it ! When Neill's avenging guns roared his illicet to the presumptuous Moulvie,\* and his followers crushed through the embattled gates in terror-stricken flight, the old tombs said good-bye to the Past. Since then they have welcomed to their shade no cavalcades like those of the Persian kings, no gaudy camps like that of the Mahomedan rebel. How strange their present, how exquisitely profane ! The shelter of the grim mausoleum is seized with a high hand for a fancy stall, and unbelievers dance to music upon the threshold of the tombs.

---

### THE SYCE'S CHILDREN.

A BUNGALOW is no sooner tenanted than the compound belonging to it is occupied by the vanguard of a hireling

---

\* The rebel Moulvie, Liakut Ali, held his Camp in the Khoosroo Bagh (the Garden of Khoosroo) at Allahabad during the Mutiny.—Z. O.



army. By-and-bye the main body of domestics takes possession, and for a month afterwards camp-followers keep dropping in. They trickle, percolate, into your premises. They steal in after nightfall or while you are at dinner, and without your knowledge their household gods strike a firm root. Legislation is no preventive, for, forbid what you like, the camp-followers will come. All that mysterious chain of relatives known as "*bhai*"\* have to find a dwelling-place, and find it they will. But the evil does not end here. Each man seems to bring a wife and two mothers with him, and these bring their sisters' children, until at last, coming home suddenly it may be, or paying without warning an unwonted visit to your stables, you are surprised to find a baby-warren flourishing on your estate. These are the syce's† children. Of course they cannot all be, but somehow, ask whom you will, the answer is the same, "Those, your lordship, are the syce's children." It doesn't matter that nine of them are all the same age, that there are no two alike in features, that your syce is only eighteen years of age—"Those, your lordship, are the syce's children." Well, God help thee, syce! Thy income is five thin rupees per mensem, and thy reputed progeny worthy of Solomon in his best days. The syce's children! They are the Philistines—the Amalekites in our borders. They are as the sand of the sea, but much browner. Images of their Maker, cast in mud and never baked.

---

\* The family circle, which, with Natives, may be expanded at pleasure so as to embrace an extraordinary number of individuals.

† Groom.

Made of dust, they live in it, and cost their parents nothing for playthings. They all seem of one sex, but which it were difficult to remember : their shaven heads suggest nothing. In habits they are social and inoffensive, but their appearance is a crime. Their bodies bulge, and their skins are full of creases. In the hot weather they go naked, and in the cold they are not much otherwise. And yet there is about the syce's children, about all native children, a touch of nature which appeals to our common kinship. When met with in by-places these morsels, these half-anna bits of humanity, rise from the ground on which, sitting, they were unperceived to make a salutation to the passing stranger : and search the round world over, there is nothing more beautiful than the reverence of the Eastern when made by little children. Their small fat bodies double softly up, and the tiny hands rise from the dusty road slowly to the forehead, while the large eyes, divided between the gravity of the occasion and curiosity of the child, look up shyly through the dark fingers. Such a salutation would have won our first parents a way past the angels' with the flaming swords. Had the syce's children salaamed to Coriolanus, the ladies of Rome might have been saved some trouble.

Their fatness is not, however, the result of a healthy assimilation of food—the natural increment of a body fed upon nutritive juices. It is rather the smooth inflation of a puff-ball or a mushroom-stalk—a rotundity induced by wind and water. Like some puppies they swell out

upon little food, and starving assume the deportment of comfortable circumstances. Troubles, however, except those of a hungry stomach, seem never to approach them. They are ignorant of the sorrows of the children of the West, where the minor is subjected to much unnatural barbarity in his cradle years.

And here I would digress for a short space, in order that I may acquaint the reader that it is my opinion that the hardiness and vigour, both of mind and body, which have made Britons such as they are, are owing not, as some writers, both of ancient and modern times, would have us believe, to the harshness and extremes of the Northern climate ; nor yet, as other authors opine, to any mongrel admixture of Teuton and Celtic blood in us ; but solely to the ordeal of ill-treatment and bodily suffering to which as babies we are all put. The Apache Indians will leave their offspring on the first night after their birth in the open air, to see whether they be worthy to live, and the Spartans of old were wont to dip their new born babies into icy water for the same purpose. Thus, too, do the nurses of England compress our stomachs with interminable bandages to the expulsion of our breath, in order that our long-windedness may be put to a severe proof, and the curriculum of physics and unsavoury waters, through which the baby attains to childhood, are ordained to try our digestions and to temper our internal economy to harsh influences. But to return to the syce's children.

Troubles, as I have said, seem to keep far from them, for their handling is left all to Nature, who fends all evils save those of her own making from them. Their mouths are always ready to open to show the laughing sparkling teeth : the black-berry eyes, when fear is absent, are always mirthful. Their amusements are, however, very few. The stock-in-trade of the Western waif—oyster shells and a dead cat—are not available. Oysters there are not, and once dead nothing belongs to man in India. It is the fee of the carrion kites who have been waiting for it since its birth. They play, therefore, with themselves and with the surface of the ground. These playthings are always with them, and they seem to need no more. Nor, as may readily be understood, does this sport incite to much hilarity. The syce's children are generally of a solemn kind. They may be seen, or glimpses of them, threading their slow silent way through a gram field, one behind the other, like pigmy Hurons on a war trail. There is no laughter at the pigeons tumbling overhead, no jostling to pick up a fallen feather, no clapping of hands when they startle out a jackal or see a cat. They do not catch the butterflies, pick the flowers, or quarrel with each other. Their playground reached, they sit down, a Liliput punchayet, and discuss the dust. They pile it into little graves and funereally deck it with religious marigolds. But they do not dance round it. They survey it pleased, but quiet. Perhaps, as they have seen their fathers do, they

crouch to it and whisper the names of gods, but more often they sit round it, and add to or take from their structure, as the long pondered thought induces them, and then, when the sinking sun reminds them of their evening meal, they rise up and in single file pass on home again. But it must not be supposed they are unhappy, for they are evidently quite happy. Only they use it sadly. The Brahminism of the country has infected them, and they take their pleasure passively—as well they may. They live on equal terms with the pariah dogs—the jackals are one grade below, their father's masters' horses one grade above, them. They exist, as it were, only two feet from the ground, arch-images of wasted and creeping humanity. They are quite harmless for there is not even any mischief for them to do. Glass to break there is none, and stone-throwing does not find favour with them. They steal fruit it is true, but only such as grows half wild in remote corners of the garden—berries which the green parrots and squirrels share unequally with them. No one loses by their criminal misappropriations, for no one but they would eat them. Poor little fragments, I could speak of you longer but I say it kindly,—you are not worth it.

---

## THE HARI-KIRI.

IN suicide there is often much heroism—notably in the systematic and orderly suicide of the Japanese. It is in their fine knowledge of Death, their reverent courtesy to his awful terrors, combined with a well-considered contempt of life, and a sublime-scorn for the pain of body that entitles the people of Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun, to our admiration. Their bravery is inimitable, for they are not ignorant of the terrors of death. From their infancy they look forward to suicide as a terrible probability, the great event for which through the intervening years they must prepare themselves. They have by heart all the nice etiquette of the Hari-kiri: how they must do this, not that, stab themselves from left to right, and not from right to left. A strangely fascinating book is the *Tales of Old Japan*, and in it most terrible is the account of the honorable institution of the Hari-kiri. I will describe it, keeping as well as I can the tone of Japanese thought:—

IN the days of Ashikaga the Shogun, when Japan was vexed by a civil war and prisoners of high rank were every day being put to shameful deaths, was instituted the ceremonious and honorable mode of suicide by disembowelling, known as Seppuku or *Hari-kiri*, an institution for which, says an old Japanese historian, “men in all truth should be very grateful. To put his enemy, against

whom he has cause for enmity, to death and then to disembowel himself, is the duty of every Samurai." Are you a Daimio or a Hatamoto, or one of the higher retainers of the Shogun, it is your proud privilege to commit suicide within the precincts of the palace. If you are of an inferior rank, you may do it in the palace garden. Everything has been made ready for you. The white-washed enclosure is marked out, the curtain is stretched, the white cloth with the soft crimson mats piled on it is spread; the long wooden candlesticks hold lighted tapers, the paper lanterns throw a faint light around; behind yon paper screen lies hidden the tray with the fatal knife, the bucket to hold your head, the incense-burner to conceal the raw smell of blood, and the basin of warm water to cleanse the spot. With tender care has been spread the matting on which you will walk to the spot, so that you need not wear your sandals. Some men when on their way to disembowel themselves suffer from nervousness, so that the sandals are liable to catch in the matting and trip them up. This would not look well in a brave man, so the matting is smoothly stretched. Indeed, it is almost a pleasure to walk on it. Your friends have come in by the gate Umbammon, "the door of the warm basin," and are waiting in their hempen dresses of ceremony to assist you to die like a man. You must die as quickly too as possible, and your friends will be at your elbow to see that you do not disgrace yourself and them by fumbling with the knife or stabbing yourself with too feeble a

thrust. They have made sure that no such mishap shall happen. They will be tenderly compassionate but terribly stern. They will guard you while your dying declaration is being read; if you are fainting, they will support you lest your enemies should say you were afraid of death. But do not trust to your old friendship with those around you; do not try to break away from the sound of those clearly spoken sentences; for if you do, your friends will knock you down, and while you are grovelling on the mats, will hew your head off with their heavy-handed swords. They will hold you down and stab you to death. Remember this—*you are to die, but you will not be allowed to disgrace yourself.* You are here an honoured guest, the preparations for your death are worthy of a Mikado, but you must not presume upon the courtesy shown you. It is merely one-half of a contract, the other being that you shall die like a Samurai. If you shirk your share of the contract, your friends will break theirs, and will strike you to the earth like the felon you are. Are you quite ready to die? Then take your way along that spotless carpet. It will lead you to the “door of the practice of virtue.” Yours is the place of honour on the piled rugs—in the centre of your friends. How keenly they fix their eyes upon you; it is their duty to see that you are dead before those tapers are out. Those tapers cannot last another fifteen minutes. Be seated. Here is your old school-mate, Kotsuké, coming to you with the dreadful tray.



How sternly his lips are closed ! You must not speak to him. Stretch out your hand to the glittering knife. Behind you, your friends are baring their strong arms ; their heavy handled swords are poised above you. Stretch out your hand. Why hesitate ? You *must* take the knife. Have you it firmly in your grasp ? Then strike ! Deep to the handle let the keen blade sink—wait a minute with the knife in the wound that your friends may see it is really there—now draw it across your body to the right side, turning the broad blade in the wound as you trail it upwards. Are you sickening with pain ? ah ! your head droops forward, a groan is struggling through the clenched teeth, when swift upon the bending neck descends the heavy sword of a friend ! A Samurai must not be heard to groan from pain.

---

### THE FROGS.

THE elements had a field-day on Monday last. For many weeks there had been nothing doing—a piping time of heat when the sun and the moon divided the twenty-four hours between them. But all that has been changed, and we had on Monday a parade of all arms. First the wind. But I had heard the jack-tree whispering of what was coming, and among the plaintains I saw that there was a secret hatching—and then on a sudden came the strong gust, rain-heralding. The wind came sweeping up, clearing the way for the

rain that was close behind, and then the rain on the swept earth that was gasping for it, descended in great round drops.

And how suddenly did all nature become aware of the change! The grateful earth sent up in quick response its thanks in a scent as fragrant to us in India as is the glorious bouquet of the hay-fields at home. The joyous birds in many-coloured song hymned the bursting of the monsoon, and the dusty trees broke out into laughing green. The swallow came down from the clouds to hawk among the trees, for a strange insect world was abroad, the sudden rain having startled into uncustomary daylight the night-loving moth and the feeble swarm that peoples the crepuscule. The young parrots, insolent though tailless, revelled among the neem trees' harsh berries, while from the softened earth, in spite of the falling rain, the mynas were busy pulling out the too curious worms. Even the wretched babblers who had hoped to raise a second brood of young, and whose nest has in an hour become a dripping pulp, hopped, and not unmirthfully, 'about. The peacocks came out and danced: even the crow was festive. But the rain that washed the aloes clean has also soaked out from their lair among them the ringed snakes, so the mongoose is holding high carnival. But hark! Already a frog?—yes, a shrivelled batrachian who for weeks has been hiding in a water-pipe, disconsolate as one of the Kings of Jewry shut up in the mountains of

Scythia, feels suddenly a rush of warm rain-water, and his dusty shrunken shell is carried out into the aqueduct. He stems the tide and is soon safely on the bank. Can it be true? and he plunges into the living water again, his shrivelled body plumping out as it greedily absorbs the grateful liquid, and soon the lean and wretched frog, whom a week ago a hungry crow would have scorned to eat (though a stomach-denying crow is as rare as a Parsee beggar), becomes the same bloated monster in yellow and green that last year harassed us with his importunate demonstrations of pleasure. "And for als moche as" he has thus cheaply attained to respectability he is inflated with pride. Mandeville thanked God with humility for the keeping of the good company of many lords, but the frog unasked thrusts himself and his amours upon our notice, holding with the Saracens that man is only the younger brother of swine. We welcome the rain but could do well without the frogs.

"The croaking of frogs," said Martin Luther at his table, "edifies nothing at all: it is mere sophistry and fruitless"; and indeed I wish we were without these vile batrachians. It is not to me at all incredible that the Abderites should have gone into voluntary exile rather than share their country unequally with frogs. I would do the same if I had anywhere to go to.

In all "the majesty of mud" they crouch on the weedy bank, croaking proudly to their dames below, who, their speckled bodies concealed, rest their chins upon the pud-

dle top croaking in soft reply. Was ever lady wooed with such damp disheartening circumstance?—the night dark, the sky filled with drifting clouds, a thin rain falling! Round the puddle's sloppy edge—the puddle itself a two days' creation—has sprouted up a rank fringe of squashy green-stuff, and in this the moist lover serenades the fair. She would listen flabbily to his beguilements all night long, but suddenly round the corner comes a dog-cart. His position might be heroic, certainly it is ridiculous. Shall he die at his post, be crushed by a whirling wheel for her he loves, or shall he—get out of the way? The earth shakes below the cavalier: this is no time to hesitate: shall he move? Yes, and plop! within an inch of his charmer's nose he has landed in the puddle. But such accidents are infrequent: the cavalier, we regret to know, generally serenades all night. By day he sleeps beneath a stone, fitting himself into a dry hole—for frogs dare not go out in the day-time. Crows trifle with them, spit them on their black beaks, and perhaps eat them. Cats, too, will amuse themselves with frogs, even the more chivalrous dog will not disdain to bite a frog when he comes suddenly upon one round a corner. In the evening, however, he takes his hops abroad, makes his meal of ants, and starts off to the nearest place of pleasure. Shall it be the municipal tank, where the vulgar swarm, frogs and toads alike; or some private *soirée musicale*, where the company is never mixed, and the risks of interruption fewer? His journey is not without its peculiar

perils. What if, by mistake, he jumps down the wrong well? the one in which live only those two old gentlemen, wretched bachelors, who sallying forth one night—just such a night as this—to serenade a fair one, mistook their way, saw water glistening, thought they heard her voice, and plumped down twenty feet. They never got out again, and now they are old and childless: their croak is sullen and defiant, for they are down a deep well and can't get out. "It is enough to sour one's temper," acknowledges our frog, and he goes forth delicately, looking before he leaps.

How the rain pours down! A wall, beneath which he has rested to croak a while, cracks, gapes, and falls. By a miracle and a very long jump, he escapes; but his jump has landed him in the lively torrent which is swirling down the middle of the road, and so, before he can draw his legs up or collect his thoughts, he is rolled along with sticks and gravel into a drain, shot into a water-pipe, squirted out at the other end, received by a rushing nullah, and ere he can extricate himself is being whirled along towards the river, where live the barbarous paddy-bird and the ruthless adjutant-crane. Better, he thinks, that the wall had fallen on him. But if he does get safe to his friends, with what gusto is he hailed! At his first note the company becomes aware of a strange presence, at the second the boldest croak has a quaver in it, the third he gives forth to a silent and listening audience. And then they recognize his voice, and with redoubled volume they join in the chorus.

## OF TAILORS.

THAT superstition is hateful, merely because it is superstition, is an inhuman doctrine. Yorick was superstitious, and so was Martin Luther. That a man should hesitate to shoot a raven lest he kill King Arthur unawares can scarcely be held a criminal cunctation. Was ever man more superstitious than the silly knight of La Mancha, the sweet gentleman who loved too well? but did ever the man soil earth who hated Don Quixote? Cervantes, when he limned him, might laugh away the chivalry of Spain, but he did not, nor did he wish to, draw a knave. And yet in nothing do we find more to hate, with the honest hatred of an Esau, than in this same superstition. Heaven-born it has bred with monster fiends. True superstition is reverent, and from it, like orchids from an old tree trunk, spring blossoms of rare beauty. But as the same tree feeds noisome fungi, the vampire epiphyte and slab lichens, so, from the grand old trunk of superstition has sprung out a growth of unwholesome fictions. What miscreant first said that a tailor was the ninth part, and no more, of a man? By what vile arithmetic proved he the lying fraction? Why a ninth, and why a tailor?

The tailor is the victim of misconstruction. Remember George Eliot's story of a man so snuffy that the cat happening to pass near him was seized with such a violent sternutation as to be cruelly misunderstood! Let

Baboo Ishuree Dass say "tailors, they are very dishonest;" he is speaking of *natives*. Let old Burton say 'the tailor is a thief'; he was fanciful. Remember the regiment of London tailors—De Quincey's brave journey-man tailor—M. Achille Jules Cesar Le Grand, who was so courteous to Marguerite in the *Morals of May Fair*—the tailor of Yarrow who beat Mr. Tickler at backgammon—the famous tailor who killed seven at one blow and lived to divide a kingdom and to call a Queen his step-mother. Read "Mouat's Quinquennial Report of the Lower Provinces," and learn that the number of tailors in prison was less by one-half than that of the priests. They were, moreover, the only class that had the decency to be incarcerated in round numbers, thereby notably facilitating the taking of averages and the deduction of most valuable observations.

Tailors, the ninth part of a man! Then are all Æthiops "harmless?" Can no Cretan speak a true word, or a Bœotian a wise one? Are all Italians "blaspheming," and is Egypt "merry" Egypt? Nature, and she is no fool, has thought good to re-produce the tailor type in bird and insect: then why does man condemn the tailor? Because he sits cross-legged? Then is there not a whole man in Persia. Why should the world exult over the tailor, whom the elephant, as we learn from Mrs. Gurton's "*Book of Anecdotes*," squirted with ditch water? We know the elephant to have been the aggressor, but just as we rejoice with Punch over the

murder of his wife, and the affront he offers to the devil, so we applaud the ill-mannered pachyderm. "The elephant," we read in childhood, "put his trunk into a tailor's shop," thrust his nose, and some four feet of it, into a tailor's house, his castle, writing himself down a gross fellow and an impertinent. For the tailor to have said "take your nose out of my shop" would have been tame, and on a mammal ill-conditioned enough to go where he was not bidden, such temperance would have been thrown away. When the Goth pulled the beard of the Senator the Roman struck him down. Did Jupiter argue with Ixion, or Mark bandy words with the lover of Isolt? The tailor did not waste his breath, but we read "pricked the elephant's nose with a needle." Here the story should end. Jove's eagles have met at Delos. But no. "The elephant," we are told, "retired to a puddle and filled his trunk with water, and, returning to the shop, *squirted it over the tailor.*" It was sagacious, doubtless, to squirt water at the tailor, and to squirt it straight, but such sagacity is no virtue, or the Artful Dodger must be held to be virtuous. The triumph of the elephant was one of Punch's triumphs—Punch, who beats his wife past recovery, hangs an intimate friend after stealing his dog, and trifles with the devil. Punch the incorrigible homunculus who, fresh from murder (his infant being thrown out of window) and with the smell of the brimstone of Diabolus still clinging to his frilled coat, complacently drums his heels upon the stage and assures his friends in



front that he has put his enemies to flight. *Root-a-too-it ! Root-a-too-it !* It is a great villain ; yet the audience roar their fat applause. So with the elephant. Yet Mrs. Gurton has handed him down to future childhood as a marvel of sagacity, to be compared only with that pig who tells the time of day on playing cards ; the cat in Wellingtons who became Marquis of Carabbas, and rose to other high honours ; and that ingenious but somewhat severe old lady who laboured under the double disadvantage of small lodgings and a large family. Of all these Mrs. Gurton in her able work preserves the worthy memories ; but that episode of the high-handed elephant and the seemly tailor should have been forgotten—irrecoverably lost like the hundred and odd volumes of Livy, or Tabitha Bramble's reticule in the River Avon. But the blame of perpetuation rests not with Mrs. Gurton but with her posterity. They admired the work and reprinted it, not like Anthon's classics, expurgated, but in its noisome entirety. The volume before me is now a score years old—one year younger than was Ulysses' dog, and two years older than Chatterton ; so perhaps it may not be re-produced in our generation, and the mischievous fable may die out before the growth of better reading as the scent of a muskrat killed overnight fades away before the fumes of breakfast. Then let us hope, the Tailor—the only story which reflects contempt on him being abolished—will assume his proper position between the angels and the anthropomorphous Apes.

## GAMINS.

ANTHROPOLOGY no doubt is a great science, but still it is merely an infant—a monster baby, giving promise of still more monstrous manhood. It is just of the age at which Charles Lamb liked sucking pigs and chimney-sweeps. It is a whelp, a cub, unlicked and of vague form. It is clay on its way to the potter, shoddy, anything except—what it will be. Toddles and Poddles, as readers of Dickens will remember, used to go on buccaneering expeditions, but they were only across the kitchen-floor, and often ended in the fireplace. Anthropology in the same way makes short excursions, and like a sportive rhinoceros often rollics itself into a kraal. At any rate, whatever the reason,—whether it be that the science is really too young to “take notice,” or whether like Paley Vollaire (who in his infancy exchanged himself for another baby) it is inordinately precocious and despises precedent,—there can be no doubt that anthropology has not as yet paid any consideration to “gamins.”

This subject has been touched upon in ephemeral literature, but it was even then a mere flirtation, a flippant butterfly kind of settling. The intentions were not matrimonial: there was no talk of taking the house on a lease. And yet it is worthy investigation. “We live only by the forbearance of those we meet,” said Montaigne. If this be true, what a gripe upon our lives have gamins got! for how many of them we do meet

—in Europe at least. Ah! there lies the point—in Europe alone. Now this fact is pregnant with matter. Why are there no gamins in India, no street Arabs with their street affronts and low-bred triumphs? What is the theory of gamin-distribution? Pariah dogs are scarcely an equivalent for those unkempt Bedouins, Ishmaels of cities, those morsels of barbarism. What is the reason, then, for their absence? Can it be too hot to turn three wheels a penny? Surely not; for dust is a bad conductor of heat, and what gamin is there—pure-minded, a gamin *nomine dignus*—that would not rather turn thirty somersaults in a dust-bin than three on a pavement? Why, Allahabad alone would tempt to an eternity of tumbling. And yet no Hindoo of my acquaintance has even offered to stand on his head! Can it be that there is no ready means of causing annoyance? What! Is there not that same dust? Would not any gamin, unless lost to all sense of emulation and self-respect, rejoice in kicking up dust if he saw the remotest glimpse of even the chance of molesting anybody? Again, why do not little Hindoos throw stones about? Because there is nothing to throw at? Hah! Put one vulture down in Islington and mark the instant result. Nothing to throw at? Mehercule! Any member of a large family will remember the tumultuous uprising and stair-shaking exit of the junior olive twigs if even a wagtail came into the garden. A cat on the lawn was convulsious. Imagine those same juniors surround-

ed by blue jays, bee-eaters, and grey squirrels ! And yet the young Hindoo sees an easy mark for any of the stones lying at his feet, and passes on. Perhaps it is something in the shape of the stones ? The argument is plausible, for Indian stones, it is true, are of hideous shapes, angular and unprovocative. The fingers do not itch to throw them. But gamins will throw brick in scraggy and uncompromising sections, *rebarbatif* and volcanic in appearance, at, when other targets fail, a kerb-stone. A gamin would heave his grandmother at a blue jay. Are Hindoos forbidden to throw stones ? Perhaps they may be, but imagine forbidding a gamin to throw stones or forbidding a gamin to do anything ! When England sells Gibraltar, it will be time to think of that ; or when, as Wendell Holmes says, strawberries grow bigger *downward* through the basket. It is evident that none of these are the right reasons, and it is evident that Hindoos were not designed for gamins. Boys, they say, are the natural enemies of creation. Young India contradicts this flat. " Boys will be boys " has stood most of us in good stead when brought red-handed before the tribune ; but young India needs no excusings for mischief. He never does any. He has all the virtues of his elders, and none of their vices. He actually prefers to behave properly. What a bouleversement of prior-convictions ! Can it be that boyhood is the period of maturity, and that as whiskers come wisdom goes ? Busby used to thrash his boys

beforehand, knowing they would require it before the week was over. What would he have done as archidiascalus of Hindoos ?

To leave this most interesting phase of this most interesting subject, let us look at it from another angle. The absence of gamins is undoubtedly a key to the theory of climates, for we know that Nature never wastes. Nature is pre-eminently economical. What, then, would have been the use of giving Bengal snow, since there are no gamins to throw it about, and no Mr. Briggs to throw it at ? It would have been sheer waste,—*ergo*, Nature made Bengal what it is. But, alas ! the subject grows under manipulation. It swells like a conjuror's ball. Psychology, anthropology, social economy, and even lollipopology (a stupendous science, be assured), come to roll the ball, growing bigger as it rolls. At present the naked fact remains to us that Hindoos are not gamins.

---

### NATIONAL SMELLS.

IN his essay showing that Jews—contrary to the generally applauded notion—"do not stink," Sir Thomas Browne uses with effect the argument that a mixed nation could not have a national smell. Among a mongrel people he contends no odour could be "gentilitious"; yet he nowhere denies the possibility, or even impugns the probability, of a pure people having a popular smell, a

scent in which the public should share alike, an aroma as much common property as the National Anthem, a joint-stock fragrance, a common wealth of odour—a perfume with which no single individual could selfishly withdraw, saying, “This is my own, my proper and peculiar flavour and no man may cry me halves in it,” as Alexander or Mahomed might have done, who, unless history lies, were divinely scented. Not that individual odours, as distinct from those of the species, have been uncommon in any times. Many instances may be found, if examples were required, to support a postulate which has ever found unqualified assent.

“For well I know,” cries Don Quixote, “the scent of that lovely rose! and tell me, Sancho, when near her, thou must have perceived a Sabeian odour, an aromatic fragrance, a something sweet for which I cannot find a name—a scent, a perfume—as if thou wert in the shop of some curious glover.”

“All I can say is,” quoth Sancho, “that I perceived somewhat of a strong smell.”

It would, however, be pure knavery to argue from the particular fragrance of Don Quixote's lady that all the dames of La Mancha could appeal to the affections through the nose. Equally dishonest would it be to disperse Alexander's scent over all Macedon, or with a high hand conclude that all Romans were “as unsavoury as Bassa.” On the other hand, to argue from the existence of a scentless individual the

innocence of his brethren, is to suppose that all violets are dog-violets, or that the presence of a snowdrop deodorizes the guilty garlic : whereas, in fact, the existence of such an individual enhances the universal fragrance, for, as Kalidasa says "one speck of black shows more gloriously bright the skin of Siva's bull." If a number of units produce an aroma, it will be hard to believe that each is individually inodorous, in which argument from probabilities I have to a certain degree the countenance of the Pundits in their maxim of the Stick and the Cake. What is more to the point, we have on the globe at least one fragrant people, for (leaving Greenlanders out of the question) no one denies that Africans are aromatic. This is no novel suggestion, but an old antiquity ; it is a point of high prescription, and a fact universally smelt out. If, therefore, one nation can indisputably claim a general odour, it is possible another may ; and much may be found to support any one who will say that in this direction "warm India's supple-bodied sons" may claim equality of natural adornment with "the musky daughter of the Nile." If it were not for the blubber-feeding Greenlanders, I might contend that "it is all the fault of that confounded sun," for heat expresses odour elsewhere than in Asia and Africa ; and I can keep within "Trismegistus his circle" and "need not to pitch beyond ubiquity" when I cite Pandemonium as an instance of unity of smell in a large population. We read in Byron's "Vision of Judgment"

that at the sound of Pye's heroics the whole assembly sprang off with a melodious twang and a variety of scents, some sulphureous, some ambrosial; and that the sulphureous individuals all fled one way gibbering to their own dominions, that odorous Principality of the Damned, whither in old times the handsome minstrel went in quest of his wife. That the infernal fraternity is uni-odorous we know, on the authority of the immortal Manchegan Squire, who says—"This devil is as plump as a partridge, and has another property very different from what your devils are wont to have, for it is said they all smell of brimstone," that is, like the Vienna matches *ohne phosphor-geruch*—that Wendell Holmes hates so honestly.

To return to India; it is very certain that but in few instances is a single native perceptibly fragrant, yet it is equally certain that if, when a dozen are together, an average be struck, each individual of the party must be credited with a considerable amount. In any court-house, with the ordinary court-house ventilation, a stranger is instantly aware of a circumambient aro<sup>u</sup>m<sup>a</sup>; he becomes conscious of a new and powerful perfume; a curious *je ne sais quoi* scent which may, possibly, like otto require only endless dilution to be pleasant, but which is at any rate very unpleasant in such volume as he experiences it from the chair at the green-baized table on the dais. No particular official or member of the public seems to be odorous



beyond his fellows, but put three together, and they are at once as odorous as six. Perhaps this is produced by sympathy, by some magnetic relation between like and like, the result of natural affinities. It may be that each native is flint to the other's steel, and that more than one is requisite for the combustion of the odorous particles; and that, as evening draws the perfume from flowers, and excitement the scent from a muskrat, or friction the sparks from a cat's back, contiguity and congregation are required for the proper expression of the fragrance of natives. As a beaver will not build a dam without company, so perhaps a native cannot be expected to smell alone. Cases of individuals innocent of all savour carry therefore no weight, unless to those who believe that all asses can speak, because Baalam's quadruped was casually gifted with articulate utterance, or that fish as a rule possess stentorian lungs, because Mr. Briggs once caught a pike that barked.

A notable point about this native savour is that though it approaches many others, it exactly resembles none. Like Elia's burnt pig, it doesn't smell of burnt cottage, nor yet of any known herb, weed, or flower. Though unique, its entity is intertwined with a host of phantom entities, as a face seen in a passing train, instantly recognized but never brought home to any one person from its partial resemblance to a hundred; and since no number of qualified truths can ever make up an absolute verity, its numberless

approximations prevent the native scent from attaining to a positive quiddity. By smelling a muskrat through a bunch of garlic an idea of it may be arrived at, but hardly more; for the conflicting odours, by distracting the nostrils, hamper the judgment, keeping it hovering in acute uncertainty between the components without allowing it to settle on the aggregate; "so blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosial result or common substance." This seems to be effected not by an actual confusion of matters but by parallel existence; rather by the nice exactitude of balance than mutual absorption; not so much by a mingled unity, as from our impotence to unravel the main threads, to single out any one streak of colour. It is like a nobody's child, a Ginx's baby, with a whole parish for parents; or one of those puddings which at every mouthful might be sworn to change its taste, and which when finished leaves one indelible but impalpable fragrance on the memory of the palate, which is called up by every passing odour, but never, in its undivided multiplicity, its composite singularity, again encountered.

In Western assemblies various smells obtain, but being various they cannot be national, and being distinct we can put our fingers on any one odour and say of it, "This is such and such a one." Thus in charity tea-drinkings, we quite expect a satin-bonnety and pepperminty atmosphere, nor are we puzzled at a bear's-greasy smell in the gallery of a church on a Summer-Sunday

evening; our noses acquiesce in an odour of calves and turnips in an agricultural meeting, and the stable boy promoted *pro temp.* need not have hissed when he used the crumb-brush, or said So-ho to a restive jelly, to betray his daily labour, for the company have smelt him out before—like Soame Jenyns' dog

“ Who soon discovered with sagacious nose

“ The well-known flavour of the parson's toes.”

The ordinary smell of English rooms, despite these varieties, is merely a carpet and fluff one—an innocent odour which can be enjoyed by sniffing the corners of one's coat pocket, wherein that mystic substance “flue” delights to conglomerate itself.

## THE CONSTABLE.

ALL my five senses have conspired together to prevent me from being ignorant that the cold weather is gone. I have spoken with the sellers of *khush-khus*; I have smelt mango-blossom; I have seen many wasps; I have heard the koël; I have felt the heat-laden wind.

Already the birds are beginning to nest. In the river-fields the sarus-cranes are dancing to each other; on the tree-tops, swaying with the hot wind, the blue-jays are nodding and bowing; from the citron-bush the bulbul is calling to his wandering fair. Already on the dove's

platform-nest may be found two-eggs; already the kite is brooding on its speckled treasures. Already the wind is whirling white dust along the traffic-burdened roads; the natives flying their kites have returned to the flimsy fabrics of summer wear. Already the constable is taking up his station at the shady corner near the sweetmeat shop—for what walnuts and pillar-posts are to the London policeman, sugar and shameeanahs are to the thin-legged men in loose shoes who guard the peace in our Indian bazaars. Not that they are over-active in their guardianship. Their inclinations are averse to alacrity, and their shoes forbid it. But they shout consumedly. They will shout at a pariah dog till, made silly with the shouting, it runs under the horse's legs. They will shout at a child three yards off till the buggy is upon it, and then will be left shouting at its mother for not having removed the child when the buggy was first seen at the other end of the street. During the days of the cold weather the constable lounges at sunny corners, enlivening long periods of drowsy basking by sudden flashes of excited shouting and unimpeachable salaaming. At night he is hardly so miserable as he should be, for a careful Government has provided him with a warm great coat, and Providence with an instinct for sheltered corners. During the hot weather he is driven from the sweetmeat stalls by the hornet-hives which empty themselves upon them, and retreating to the nearest shade, stands limp and gaping

‘like the crows under the trees’ until you pass—seating himself before you are out of sight upon the charpoy which he does not conceal has been placed there for his comfort. At the corner of the street squats a hireling, instructed to awaken the slumbering guardian of the peace when danger threatens—the vedette who warns reposing authority that a greater than he is at hand. And when the heat of the day is past, when the bheesties, with their red aprons tucked about their loins, are teasing the dust, the constable arranges his puggree afresh, accepts an offering of a lump of sugar from his obedient servant the sweetmeat-seller, and, like Jonathan refreshed with his taste of honey, feels again a constable—and clears his throat. Yet he is not without his uses, and under the eye of a higher authority awakens into an activity to which only the sudden expansion of the sea-anemones affords a parallel.

I was once in a native city when a religious procession was in progress. The market square was full of sight-seers, and the ease with which the police opened up wide lanes (and left them open behind them) through the white-clothed crowd, was a curious sight to me fresh from England, where a holiday crowd treats a policeman as an old joke. But here, before the truncheoned arm of a native inspector, the people melted away like shadows before a bull’s-eye lantern, falling at the bidding of his index finger into orderly ranks, just as do the thorn bushes in the Fairy tale when the Prince is making his

way through the enchanted jungle to the Sleeping Beauty in the midst. Meanwhile constables wandered about shouting, here, there and everywhere, rifts openings in the cloud of lookers-on at every breath from the men in blue, whose tracks showed, from the elevated position I occupied, like the splitting up of a bowl of curds by drops of whey. A broad lane was cleared through the midst for the procession, and with wonderful order the crowd waited for the show. Presently there came on, with a melancholy discord of shells and tom-toms, the vanguard of the army of Rama, for the pageant was to represent the great episode of the Ramayan, where the sky-blue hero allies himself with the monkeys and the bears to recover the saucer-eyed Seeta from the devil-King of Ceylon. The vanguard was the artillery—two pasteboard pieces on a pasteboard stand dragged by an inadequate youth in tinsel. After him, the ordnance, came some irregular horse, one pony being especially irregular, the rider thereof, with a painful want of that self-respect which should characterize a warrior in orange calico with pink facings, being seen to exchange jokes with an advanced member of the monkey contingent. This was composed of some fifty persons dusted with yellow powder and furnished with long tails of rope, calculated, as Valmiki assures us, to alarm their enemies very considerably by the simple terror of their appearance. Between each division of the army, the artillery, cavalry, and infantry, were carried, in elaborate struc-

tures of tinsel and paper, the various heroes of the Ramayan, an elephant or two and some camels filling up the gaps of the slowly moving pageant. After all these was borne a pavilion of considerable beauty and very curious workmanship, in which were seated the family of the givers of the show. Before it marched a ragamuffin crowd of poor cousins who, grateful for the meal to come, shouted hungrily the munificence of their wealthy relations. Among them was one representing Seeta, a terrible travesty of the ill-used wife of Rama; and I could not help regretting the scruples of the country that prevent a pretty woman from personating in public that model of her sex. On the way to the city I had seen a girl who would have taken the part well. She was being carried along in a curtained palanquin, but as a pretty woman does not allow curtains to hide her from the world, I saw her lovely face more than once between the uplifted draperies. It is, I am led to believe, only the very plain women who are too severely virtuous.

But while the Hindoo procession was passing, my eye had wandered to the Moslem mosque across the road, and seldom have I seen so picturesque a sight, so interesting a contrast. The sun was setting, and just before it touched the horizon, a bell called the faithful to prayer. In the street below, with shoutings and idiot gambollings, the monkey contingent of Rama was passing in dust and din—Hanooman himself, perched on the back of an elephant, being on a level with the

flat roof of the mosque on which were gathering the Mussulmans, seemly in their simple dress and reverent in feature and action; and while the red-painted monkey-god was waving his tail and making grimaces to the shouting crowd below, the long line of worshippers above and beyond him kept sinking and rising with the solemn cadence of their ritual.

And while I was taken up with watching them, Rama's army had passed by, and the constable was left without occupation in the empty square. And as I drove away, he shouted violently to an old woman, who was washing her head on a doorstep, in quite another street, to move out of the way of my buggy.

---

### MOSQUITOES.

It seems hard to believe that there should be any confusion as to the identity of mosquitoes, and equally hard to believe that any journal should pretend ignorance. Yet an English serial lately said that Indian mosquitoes, *our* mosquitoes, ~~are~~ only small sandflies, and speaks of "a terrible pest, the sancudos," as the real mosquito. If, at the time of writing, the author had a few of these "small sandflies" reconnoitring the back of his head, he was justified in writing anything; but he should have said so, or else he stands the risk of being sent by public subscription to Phocis, to undergo a course of hellebore—



a reputed cure for lunacy ; or to India, to know mosquitoes in the flesh, that he might be tormented out of his flippancy. For flippancy it is, of the gravest criminal order, to speak of these tragical enormities—these sinful abominations that badger us out of our judgment and leave us viciously wretched—as “small sandflies.” Small they may be in appearance, but they are Behemoths and colossal in crime—it was “the little foxes” that ate Isaiah’s grapes, and “the little people” who killed “the very strong man Kwasind” on the river Taquamènaw. But *sandflies* they are not. Sandflies are quite a distinct evil as different from mosquitoes as prussic acid is from arsenic, or the Plague of Boils and Blains from the Black Death, and it would hazard the very existence of a naturalist to hear the two insects confused.

Not that naturalists look at them æsthetically or morally ; they understand them only in their quiddity and head-thorax-and-tail physicalities. They call a mosquito by a difficult name, and know how its stomach looks under a microscope ; but this view, though intrinsically valuable, scarcely rises to the subject. There is no feeling, no poetry in such treatment of a mosquito, and the knowledge is of a lower stratum and a meaner calibre than seems required. The desiderata of information are, whether it is possible that mosquitoes lead very unhappy lives, and scream at you under pressure of great domestic affliction, and whether they couldn’t be subjected to utilization, made into glue or something. It may lessen the morti-

fication to know that it was a *sancudos* or a *culex pipiens* that had out-manceuvred you, your punkah, and your curtains of net, and not an ordinary vulgar "mosquito," but it would not lessen the irritation. The thing we call a mosquito would bite as hard by any other name, and with regard to their horrid persons enough is known already. It is sufficient that they look gaunt and empty before sitting down on you, and that after dinner they look quite the reverse,—fat, fozy, and plethoric. Physically, they seem to be at least of two kinds, the one drab-coloured and the other speckled, each as bad as the other, but much worse. Morally, their divisions are legion, and a musically inclined pachyderm might reasonably expect to find the full octave among them. What music would a choir of hungry mosquitoes make for a dance of ghouls! What a fine accompaniment to the gambols of corpses! Even the unmusical can detect individuals by their tone. There is the speckled baritone that rushes at you from the other end of the garden, and with three trumpet notes proceeds to drill a hole into you, and usually gets killed for his clumsiness; for he settles on you with a confiding flop that would do credit to an able-bodied fly. But he is far preferable to the miscreant that skulks and dances behind your head for half an hour, leaving you to suspect that it has settled on your ear only by the sudden cessation of its exasperating sing-song in a minor key. Some that are too hungry even to roar at you before beginning dinner, and which, blind

with their horrid lust for food, pitch down on the first corner of you or your clothes that they come to, without a thought of grace, are less hateful than the dawdling dilettanti, which hover undecidedly about your ears or the nape of your neck, whining an obligato recitative in C sharp ; or the others that trifle in a falsetto with your knuckles or anklebones. Straightforward honest wickedness is at all times better than underhanded villainy, and it is more comfortable to forgive an offender than permit the offence. Therefore, of the two mosquitoes that come with the fixed purpose of eating you, that is the lesser criminal which begins first. He is more pardonable than the procrastinating villain, who, however long his grace before meat may be, and however indifferent and careless his demeanour will, you know, ultimately attain his end and satisfy his hideous propensities out of sight—and probably out of reach. There is no sinner so bad as a tedious one, and the worst part of a mosquito bite is the lively apprehension of it. Some one has said that it is while he is waiting for Calcraft to let him drop that society is revenged on the murderer, and this is true. The fly does not object to being eating by the spider ; he expected that. But what he hates is being wrapped up in web, like a parcel, beforehand.

By analogy I conclude that the mosquito which comes to bite you, and bites you without more ado, is not so execrable as the other which comes to bite you and keeps you waiting while it sings its catechism.

## FROM THE RAW TO THE ROTTEN.

THE last word of Science, in the department of Natural History, is the determination of genera and species by, so to say, Psychology. Professor Agassiz, in his work on Species and their Classification, establishes that the ultimate demarcation between classes of animals is to be looked for in their moral, not their physical, differences. Thus a griff\* and a Qui Hai † are, without doubt, very different (I, of course, am keeping pace with Science, and speak of moral, not physical, differences) —more so than the Andaman man exhibited in Calcutta and the prize ape in the Regent's Park Gardens. Indeed, the difference between the latter is so trivial that if some Andaman man would only grow enough tail to catch hold of, that caudal inch would make the whole world akin, and with that missing link supplied, we could slide without a jolt down the scale of creation from Angels to the marine Ascidians. But between the widely-separated orders of Griff and Qui Hai there is no missing moral link. The changes are as gradual as in the development of non-existence—the darling of Hindoo philosophers. First, "the antecedent" prior to the existence of any experience whatever; then "the emergent," that is, when the non-existence of the

---

\* Griff—a griffin, a new comer.

† Qui Hai—an old resident.

griff and the existence of the Qui Hai are equally disputable; and finally, "the absolute" and not to be mistaken veteran. And between the last griff and the first Qui Hai comes a "hierarchy of sad experiences" composed of individuals in every degree of emergence and development, taking rank by seniority—an order of promotion which, under such circumstances, becomes the most insensate plea ever projected in the face of reason. Because Tomkins' liver is larger by twelve months than Timkins', is Tomkins a better man than Timkins? Ought Tomkins, by the passive virtue of prior toasting, to become a model for Timkins? We read in Shelley that "Peter Bell, when he had been with fresh-imported hell-fire warmed, *grew serious*," but he did not swell. He arrogated no right of precedence from a misfortune. The children of old, who were passed through the fire in the valley of Hinnom, gained no credit by the ordeal, though their cinerary remains doubtless gave great satisfaction to their fathers and to Moloch. The society of the Fleet Prison is not arranged by priority of occupancy, but by the respectability of the amount owed; the preference being rightly given to the responsible acts, not the passive sufferance. It is preposterous for the cat picked up last Thursday week to look upon the kitten found yesterday as a parvenu—a desperate griff; or for the two-year-old in the nursery to treat the bran-new baby with loftiness. Could a departed spirit plume itself on its whilom carcase having been hung before a certain

other, or poison be proud because it is "the chiefest of evils?"

Seniority in endurance alone is no measure of excellence; for though no one ever came into the world a Qui Hai, many go out of it griffs. But the raw company who aspire to the veneration due to maturity, assume a year of vegetation to be twelve months' progress! They begin to call themselves Qui Hais when they are only old griffs, and because they have passed the half-way-house think themselves at home. When they are only big buds they judge themselves blossoms, mistaking old lambs for sheep. They are still mere embryos,—neither pig nor pork: they are tadpoles, pipped eggs, meat-teas,—anything, in short, that is neither one thing nor the other; and certainly they are not Qui Hais. They are like the mandrakes that Burton speaks of, which at one time were hawked about in Europe, and which, by the craft of the grower, were made to resemble the human form. Yet those were not productions of Nature, but merely contrivances of art, deceiving the crass public—"the green probationers"—by a merely postulatory resemblance, nothing nearer to the genus *Homo* than the *phœnicopterus* to the Phoenix, the malachite to the emerald, or the race of pigmies who were said to contest the southern bank of the Ganges with the partridges in possession, to any race of which ethnology knows the habitat. These counterfeit Qui Hais, however, could as little be spared here as the middle classes in Europe; for as there is naturally more blood in the world

than black puddings, and more hemp than ropes,—in fact, more raw material than manufactured,—so the underdone Qui Hai predominates in every company. But there is surely in this no reason for arrogance. It is merely a wise dispensation in nature that such should be the burden laid upon a society which has no mothers-in-law.

---

### ISTE PUER.

MANY creatures claim to be the best abused, but I would pass them all by, and award that title to—the boy, the “soaring, human boy” as Chadband puts it. A writer aiming rather at terseness than accuracy, has called the boy “the enemy of creation,” but the criticism, in that it does not grow from argument, is not worth a fig—a wild fig

Every child, I take it, is a pet of Nature's, but among them the boy child is her favourite. There is no favour she withholds from him, and his only defects are of those things which will come upon him all too soon, and which acquired will but embitter his life. The boy, it is true, has no experience, but who would not rather be ignorant of the taste of the Dead Sea fruit? Again, he has no ballast, but surely then all the more conspicuous is Nature's custody of him! What other charges can be laid against him? That he is young is hardly a crime, and being young, if he possesses the attributes of youth, he is hardly to blame.

He is a thief? Yes, but of what? He will steal apples from an orchard although a farmer with his dog keep

guard. Every rookery must pay him tribute of its eggs, and every garden of its gooseberries. But hear him relate his exploit! There is none of the shamefacedness of a thief in his narration. He glories in the felony, and when he can add assault to the lesser crime (he has pelted the lawful owner with his own fruit), his achievement becomes a triumph. And not to him only but to all his school-fellows, who burn henceforth to emulate his deed of high emprise. The narrative of such a felony gives fresh blood even to the law-respecting adult. First, the lad tells of the stealthy approach, in the distance the farmer disappearing, then of the paling with hooked nails atop, on which, with puncturings of the flesh, the trouser was torn, and then the Red-Indian-like entrance to the orchard. The climbing up the trees,—the handling of the great round fruit—the encounter, in returning, with the labourer who would capture him but is discomfited—the homeward flight across the turnip field—the pursuit among the sheep hurdles—the final escape! And all this told by one ruddy-faced, clear-eyed lad sitting munching, among a munching circle, one of the forbidden fruit, while to each episode the merry music of real laughter lends its applause, and fired by the narration others plan a like adventure for the morrow. Surely, none of these boys are *thieves*? Why, let one of their number take tomorrow a penny from a purse, or a tartlet from a shop-counter—let him, in fact, “steal like a thief”—and the orchard robber of yesterday,



the owner of many stolen rook's eggs, and he with his pocket still full of pilfered gooseberries, will kick him and call him "thief !" And the difference is one of something more than sentiment.

Nor is the boy a liar. For it is well known in public schools, and where the master is of a mean kind the knowledge is basely utilized, that to detect a culprit there is no surer means than to ask those suspected "did you do it?" If one of them did it, he says "yes." His schoolfellows know he did it, and before them he is ashamed to lie, and having this honest shame he has no claim to the brand of liar. In a school of good tone—I have such a one in my mind's eye now—a boy who had lied, who had made a false declaration to save himself from punishment, was considered below good fellowship: and when a boy is scouted among his fellows, he seldom remains among them long. At each re-assembling of the school, now one and now another of these outcasts is found to have disappeared, and no one regrets the disappearance. For the boy, in punishment and in hate, is very severe, often visiting with great cruelty a single slip. Yet he is not unfair, for the backslider seldom appears in after-life as a popular man, or respected in his profession. The black sheep of school, when found out, seldom rise again, and when heard of afterwards it is generally in the haunts of black sheep.

The boy is a glutton,—well, what of that? So are half the fathers in the world. The only difference in the

gluttony is, that the boy's stomach has not by sad experience taught him caution, drawn out for him in clear black and white its tabulary statement of likes and dislikes. The voracity of a boy at a picnic is, it is true, supernatural and awful to contemplate, but it does no one harm. The misdemeanour of over-eating is an innocent one in youth, and the contempt for congruities which the boy reveals in his confused feeding is very enviable to us whose *ilia* demand a seemly regularity in quantity and quality. I have seen a boy on Christmas Eve eating oysters, and while waiting for the next one to be prepared with vinegar and condiments, occupying himself with a mince pie! I confess to having been aghast at the frightful spectacle, but that boy has grown into a very fine young hussar, and I would not remember his exploit against him unkindly. Nor is it only on the good things of life that a boy will debauch, for he will make merry over very frugal fare. See him on a holiday ramble. He is eating half the time. The nut and bramble yield him sustenance, the rose bush gives up to him her bright berries, the hawthorn its coral bunches, and the crab-apple its wrinkled fruit. In early Spring he eats the tender sprouts of the white thorn, and calls it "bread and cheese"; in Summer he finds "buns" in the calix of the thistle: and in Autumn startles the wood-pigeons from beneath the beech trees in his search for "mast." The streamlets give him water-cresses, and the thicket the acid sorrel and the pignut. Not content with the store of wild strawberries, rasp-

berries, gooseberries, currants, bilberries, chestnuts, cranberries, and wild cherries (for all these grow wild in different parts of England), he lays under toll the sloe, and even, *crede experto*, rifles the dewberry, the yew and the honey-suckle. He will rob a squirrel to roast its hoard of acorns. And on this wild feeding has been founded the charge against the boy of being "nasty!" Yet we would not undertake to decide which is the nastier feeder, the boy who divides his hazelnuts with the dormouse, and the fruits of hedge and copse with the finches, or the man who bolts the slab flesh of turtles, feasts on carrion-fed prawns, keeps his cheese till it is acrobatic, and his grouse till it smells. For myself I prefer the latter diet immensely, but small lads at school would, for an apple, barter away a slice of the ripest Stilton, and forego a basin of Alderman's soup for the looting of a filbert bush.

The boy, it is objected, is personally dirty. I confess that he protests against cold water on winter mornings, and that in his rambles he accumulates mud on his clothes with an extraordinary diligence; but his elders practically protest against cold water\* on cold mornings by seldom or never using it cold, and as for the mud, that is the fault of the mud; for I deny that any boy absolutely prefers to have pounds of clay on his boots, stuffing up the lace holes and making running wearisome. Mud-pies I do not hold with, considering them altogether abominable, but the boy of whom I am

speaking is beyond the years for which such cates have attraction, and has arrived at a period of life when, if he had his way, he would as certainly abolish mud as Latin Grammars. At the same time, I confess that cleanliness is a matter of some indifference to him; not but that he might prefer the green on tree-trunks *not* coming off on his clothes, but the knowledge that it will certainly come off does not make him hesitate to climb a mouldy fir tree on the trivial pretence of investigating the contents of a manifestly-ancient wood-pigeon's nest. He arrives on the ground again with the front of his waistcoat green with the mould, and with a hole in his trousers, but he knows that "some one" will brush and mend his apparel, so he confines his regrets to the fact of the nest having been empty of eggs.

That he is also mischievous cannot be denied; but in how many cases does not the mischief arise from a laudable spirit of inquiry? How was he to foresee when he wished to test his powers of throwing a stone that the accursed pebble would drop on the old gentleman who happened to be on the other side of the wall; or when he set his dog at a cat, "to see if it could catch it"; by what process of argument was he to know that the cat and its pursuer would run through a cucumber frame into the dairy? And is not hunting a cat natural to an English boy? He will hunt a cat when he is a boy as certainly as he will hunt a fox when he is a man. At the same time, he would as soon in his youth worry a

kitten as in his manhood he would shoot a vixen. Stone a cock or pelt a gander?—of course he will ! But he will not lift a rude hand to a chicken, or bully a gosling. And this is chivalry undeveloped. Cruel as children are (and for their cruelty the Ana made of them their soldiers, turnkeys, and executioners) they are wonderfully full of compassion. A mouse may well fear for its life when detected by a boy, but the lad who would kill a cock-robin is not common, and he who takes delight in tripping up the old apple-woman, will as readily give a penny to her little grand-daughter.

---

## FROM ALLAHABAD TO NYNEE TAL.

### *A quasi-sentimental Journey.*

ONE o'clock of the morning by Madras time, and the Mail Train North snorting and fizzing impatiently in the Allahabad station. But what a gross impostor is a train ! To look at and listen to it one would think that there was hardly time to fling into the carriage the more valuable portions of your luggage and to plunge after it yourself, before you are whisked out of sight of sorrowing relatives and the bright refreshment-rooms. But the engine is only showing off. Go and drink a cup of coffee at one of the marble tables in the room yonder, tell your bearer to make your bed in the carriage, buy "tomorrow's" *Pioneer*, light your pipe, and when you have done all this, you will still find that the engine-driver is saying "good-night"—

that the Mail Train North has no intention of starting before the proper time. But at last the long leg of the station clock is close upon the short leg, halting at one. The engine-driver has drunk the tumbler of farewell to the last drop (and has eaten the sugar at the bottom with a spoon); even the fat native has got his ticket, and after many violent but ineffectual efforts to get into a horse-box, has been thrust into his carriage. The bell-ringer jerks his instrument as if he really meant it this time; the bustle suddenly ceases, the whistle sounds, everybody steps back, and the train—this impatient, panting monster that seemed fifteen minutes ago about to run away—this huge creature which for the last hour has been pawing the ground, and restlessly fidgetting up and down shuntings—is no sooner encouraged to proceed than he jibs and backs, guard-first, out of the station! Yes, it is a fact: the Mail Train North has started for Calcutta; but it soon thinks better of it, and with a sudden plunge rushes back past the platform. A streak of lamp-light and faces, and then we are out into the dark night.

The long lines of black smoke lie parallel on the damp night air, and great festoons of grime pass the windows: the trees show like hill ranges on the horizon, and the shrubs like bisons. The earth appears of a silver white, the colour of a mackerel's stomach, except where glisten the water-pools, at which the night-glimmer seems to reveal the stealthy jackals drinking, and where the flooded ditches reflect the glare of the passing train. And

now a station comes sliding along towards us, the train goes more slowly forward to meet it, the telegraph-posts pass in sober procession, the trees assume a vegetable shape, and we are once more among our fellow-beings.

There is the station-master with a blue paper in his hand; the guard who, before you have gone a hundred miles, you will recognize at each station as an old friend; the six natives who are always going to be left behind, or who think they are; the *bhistie* offering water to those who don't want any, but deaf to the yells which issue from the darkness where the third-class carriages are standing. There is the station Babu, a thin, sharp-faced, under-sized being, whose explanations drive distracted the sore-footed villager who has just tramped in, and wishes to take a ticket to some place at which the train does not stop; and who bustles his wife—she looks like a great fly that some greater spider has swathed in web, or like the cocoon of some monster tissue-weaving caterpillar—hither and thither as if she were a bale of inferior piece-goods. But there is little time for delay. The blood of the iron horse is up, and it is snorting to be off; the whistle screams, and the engine, as if it had taken fright, bolts, leaving the rustic with his chrysalis wife to explain to the Babu and to the *bhistie* the absurdity of rapid motion and the whereabouts of the village whither he had hoped to travel. And so on through the dim night. Long reaches of grey country, sudden interruptions of bricks and mortar, human voices and banging of doors.

A hundred miles gone! *Been asleep?* Did any one ever confess with a good grace to having been asleep in a train? Before you start you take pains to explain how very irksome railway travelling is to you, how you always find the greatest difficulty in closing your eyes, and how the carriages on every line you are going to travel on, are each and severally the most uncomfortable carriages on any line. How, then, can you be expected to confess that four minutes after you lay down on your bed with a grumble at the motion, the night lamp, and the Board of Directors—just one minute after you wound up your watch—that you fell asleep, and that you have been sleeping ever since? Of course you remember all the stations: also, of course, it is very distinctly in your recollection how on five different occasions you spoke to your fellow-passenger, and found him fast asleep, “snoring, I assure you, awfully.” You did at one time close your eyes, you allow, and this is why, when the lamp was shining full on your up-turned face, your fellow-passenger made the mistake of supposing you were asleep. But you were not asleep; you were only thinking. You always think best with your eyes shut.

Asleep or not asleep, however, the night has been passed, and the train has brought us to Cawnpore, but the adjuncts of Cawnpore are very much like the adjuncts of Allahabad. The same woman in red-stained clothes is going to the well with her glittering lotahs on her head; the same man is sauntering across to his work in the fields—a white cloth flung loosely round



and over him; the crops are the same, the trees and pariah dogs, the kine and the muddy buffaloes. But there are differences. The *babul* trees beyond Cawnpore grow in fine avenues; the ditches are filled full with plumes of grass-blossom, satin white; in every hollow along the rails for many a mile it lies thick, hardly allowing the water-roses to shew their pink blossoms, hardly allowing the water-lilies room for their flat leaves and many-petalled flowers to float, affording a safe covert for the pied snippet and careful egrets. I remember Cawnpore not by its fresh eggs, its well-made toast, its better coffee, nor yet by the trim appearance of the roads and grounds as seen from the breakfast table, but by a sight I saw when we had left the station. The train had gone perhaps a mile, our pipes were hardly re-lit, when, looking from the window, I saw the sight.

From a mud-walled hamlet there was coming forth into the keen morning air a poor procession of mourners: a woman in a green kirtle stood watching them as they passed with their light burden towards the mangoe tope across the fields. Three men carrying away a dead child, a little brother running with short steps alongside: in his hand a potsherd filled with fire. That was all. The pyre will be on the river's bank away beyond those old mangoe trees, from whose boughs the family for four generations have gathered their scanty income. Surely the story of the death was that beautiful one in the Book of Kings:—"It fell on a day that the child went out to his father, to the reapers. And he said unto his father, my

head, my head." And the father said to a lad, 'carry him to his mother.' And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon—and then died." But here is no Elisha, and so the child of the Hindu woman is for ever dead. The grey-bearded mummer who exacts the reverence of the ignorant hamlet is powerless to bring back the little life. The mother may offer him her jewels—her heavy nose-ring, the envy of her daughters, her plaited bangles, her toe-studs brought years ago from far off Delhi—but all the Parohit's presumptuous invocations have not the power of the whispered prayer of the humble Tishbite. So the body is being carried away to be burned.

Yonder is passing through the corn-fields, still green with their young crops, a party worthy of notice. A woman brightly clothed is riding on a small white horse burthened with a ponderous head, and still more ponderous saddle: before her is set a little boy, perhaps three years old, his cap of gilded tinsel, his dress of gauzy muslins with brilliant edges. Behind the horse stride the husband and his brother; their step is brisker than when they are bound for their ploughs, their clothes more brilliantly white: on their feet are red shoes turned up at the toes with green. In their left hands they hold tight a little bundle, their right hands grasp six-foot bamboos. The party is on its way to marry the little boy to a still smaller girl. The baby-bridegroom evidently likes it: he claps his hands to the curly-tailed puppy that barks beneath the horse's nose, and waves his arms to the pass-

ing train: and the parents like it, for by the expedition they add one more to the long list of their holidays, and one more family to the long list of their relations. The match is a good one in every way, say the neighbours—most desirable. What if the pair only number five summers between them? Will they not both grow?

The next village will hardly have a wedding in it for many a long year to come. The railway has destroyed it. Once it was a thriving village: the men of Roree were not a little proud of their birthplace, for did it not give its name to a district? But the railway came, and then the rains, but there was something wrong, for the water which used to flow down to the valley remained upon the fields. To throw corn-seed upon water seemed to the villagers waste of grain, so the land produced no crop that year. But the next year it did—a crop of deaths. The Government sent down its chiefs of sanitation, and they sat in judgment upon it; but the plague meanwhile was reaping with keen sickle, and the remnant of the living fled from the village of the dead! It now belongs by right of sole possession to the adjutant birds, who stand, economizing one leg, upon its grassy walls, or parade with a severe solemnity up and down its courts. The adjutants are always of a grave mien—even when, as happened near Etawah, they are assembled for the discussion of so cheerful a topic as a dead horse. The assembly is hardly a pleasing one. The tainted air tells plainly the object of the visit—the lure which drew together the staid adjutants, the greedy vultures, and the communist

crows. In the midst of the strange company lies the terrible thing: it seems at times to be tossing with life, as some gross bill or rasping talon is plunged into it. Perhaps the horse is not quite dead. But it must be, for there is a gleam as of a clean picked rib, an ugly confusion of animal noises, now and then a great wing flapped, and a quick angry croak. This is no time for waste of words; the throat has other duties just now than to give passage to idle threats: and but for a thick croak, or a sudden riot of feathers, the birds are silent at their meal. In the outer ring, waiting sulkily till the adjutants shall have eaten their fill, sit the vultures, their ragged pinions drooped to the ground, their bald heads erect to watch every movement of the revellers—unable to approach the carcase and yet unwilling to give up hopes. Around the company, and in and out, hop the bright-eyed crows, ever and again making a plunge for a morsel, alert to seize an opportunity to annoy the less active, or to snatch up the shreds of carrion which are flung out of the circle by a sudden wrench: now perched on a vulture's back to command a better view, now darting in between the adjutants' legs, now rolling on the ground in sullen contest with some more lucky bird.

But the train does not wait while I try to drive my drunken pencil across the unstable paper: each paragraph in the note-book is a milestone. And then Etawah—and breakfast. But this is no place for the sentimental traveller to linger. The hungry may do much worse. Then Aligurh and its ill-favoured country sliding

on their way to Allahabad ; and next Toondla—may Toondla be forgiven for its draught-beer!—and then through the falling evening on to Ghaziabad. Two hours to stay is little hardship, for luggage has to be juggled from one side to the other, dinner has to be eaten and a long pipe to be smoked, and then into the carriage again, and away through the moonlight to merry Meerut. But not merry just now—the beautiful station is fast asleep, but even the stranger, rattled along in the gharrie of the country, can appreciate its smoothly metalled roads, spacious and edged with trees : the roomy compounds, and the wide maidans behind which at attention loom in line a great battalion of barracks. A sudden turn, and the light which pours slanting from half-a-dozen windows tells the traveller that, in one house at any rate there is some one awake to help him on his journey. A thousand blessings on thee, kindly Q ; what good angels prompted you *and her* to sit up half into the weary morning to welcome the tired and hungry wanderers? The comfortable light from the windows, the brighter light within: the cheery drawing-room, the supper table, and, above all, your kindly welcomes. When you are travelling, Q, may others, with such gentle courtesy, invite you to break your weary journey, and may their welcome be as kindly and their god-speed as hearty.

In the dāk-gharries leaving Meerut. A night glorious with a full moon and cool air, comfortable with cosy rugs, a tobacco pouch and flask: the tattoos striving their vile

worst to avoid the labour for which they were foaled and bred, and to compass the destruction of the fare. And who can forget those suddenly recurring periods of full-stop ? Two ponies are seen creeping with a mournful demeanour up the road-bank ; are seized, when they arrive upon the level, by a savagely-costumed youth, who has hitherto confined his attentions to a melancholy post-horn ; are thrust backwards, with much perspiration and bad language into the primitive harness ; and then, as soon as the youth has resumed his abominable music, and the traveller has made up his mind that he is really off at last, they turn solemnly round, and look in to the gharrie-door. And now the whole establishment is provoked into a deadly enmity towards those sad-faced ponies, and falls to whacking with long sticks on their responsive ribs. At last—a man, scantily clad and yelling hoarsely, pulling by a thin rope each tattoo's ewe-neck to the extremity of its tention, and two others pushing at each wheel—the unhappy animals are deluded into moving a leg. Once set a-going, they are lost animals : shouts grow more frantic, necks are pulled an inch longer, the wheel describes the first segment of a circle ; matter yields to mind, and in a wild burst of despair the gharrie on a sudden wakes up, and is carried headlong onwards. And so on to Gurmukhtesur : intervals of mad speed, post-horn, and jolting ; intervals of stagnation, sleepy syces and coolies, stubborn relays, and persuasive *lathies*.

The tattoo, I thought to myself, is a staunch conservative, Hinduized by cycles of monotonous ignorance into

a sullen obstructiveness. He has no objection to carry, as did his fathers before him, great loads of merchandize, field produce, or fat traders, from morning to night and day after day; but he resents our headlong civilization, as he calls it, our "galloping legislation." He is, he says, being civilized too fast: he is not a hansom horse yet, but his descendants will develop in time, when his sons through many generations shall have intermarried with the stately daughters of Feringhee studs, the high-bred dames of Oosur, Ghazipore, Buxar, and Koruntadee; when the even kunkur has replaced the weary mud and dust, and the sons of men have learnt the secret of keeping roads in repair. "Wait," cries the tattoo,—“we are a great nation that has been slumbering for centuries, contented with the memories of our primæval splendour. But we are only just waking up from our fast sleep: our eyes are still dazzled, for have we not opened them full upon the glare of the nineteenth century? After the moonlight of the long past, the gaslight glories of the sudden present bewilder our slumber-sodden brains. Let us wake up by degrees. We are being educated, and in time will be all you wish: at present we are only tats.” But our century has no patience: and with our mail-carts, horns, and long-thonged whips, we ride behind small tattoos at hansom speed. One good result is that we are soon at Gurmukhtesur—the dawn breaking.

On the sands at Gurmukhtesur. This is a *fête* day, and as our doolies wind their way among the stiff tussocks

of keen harsh grass which the sand barely supports, the long processions of men, their foreheads gaudy with white, ochre, and vermilion, and the women, with their hair worked up into a high turret, their left cheeks half covered by the extravagant nose-jewel, their strangely coloured clothes, a head sheet of crimson-red, a kirtle of orange, and a bodice of many-coloured chintz—was a sight that should be vouchsafed only to artists. Beggars are plentiful thrusting crippled limbs before us, arrogant in proportion to their deformities; cattle block up the narrow foot-paths and resent interference; salesmen abound with a variety of valueless wares. Here a man is offering to the pious crowd sweetmeats of various shapes, but monotonously dirty; there another is sitting beside a poor dozen of clay figures; a third a little way off sells coarse green flasks, in which the worshippers carry home with them the water of the holy river. Among the women I saw two of a strange beauty. They were walking together, each holding on her head a flat earthen flask, with a raised mouth in the centre of the disc. Their dress was as brilliant as bright colours, placed contrary to all the canons of Western taste in audacious juxtaposition, could make them—orange with scarlet, yellow with red, and each with all. They were above the average height of women, strong-limbed, but shapely, and holding themselves as only Eastern damsels do. Their colour was a fine maize; their mouths full-lipped, but not weak in expression; nose and eyebrows perfect; and their eyes—they were not eyes, but *glories*.



My doolie was stopped a few seconds close before them, but in that time there was leisure to guess at in those great eyes a strange depth of meaning, to catch a glance that spoke with equal force of love and hate, adultery or homicide. I think that one must have been named Jael, the other Judith.

Then we reached the river and the ponderous boat on to which our doolies were lifted. Behind us crowd in a score of men who, their piety assuaged, are returning to their fields and every-day work. We are punted out, and farther and farther recedes the white sand of the river-side, fringed with the brilliant colours of the holiday dresses, and fainter and more faint come to us the cries of invocation to Gungajee. Then the unwieldy boat gets aground, and the boatmen lay down their oars,—miracles of false balance and bad workmanship, weighty without power, bulky without strength,—and slip into the river, and with much shouting pull the crazy structure into deep water. We move along again, on either hand a long reach of sand, until we reach a point where a dunghill has been heaped up on a slope as a jetty for the convenience of man and beast. Pride is out of the question, so I use the dunghill as a pier, and at the upper end find myself once more on the sands, a prey to doolie-men, who carry me off across an uninteresting plain, a wilderness of stunted palm-trees. Here and there stands one of a normal stature; but the greed of their owners for the potent juice has dwarfed all the rest. Through these we pass,

and suddenly emerge upon the welcome stage where gharries are waiting for us. And as we rattle and jingle along, how very much alike one mile is to another ! The occasional corn patches with the *machans* like eagles' nests standing out from the middle ; the circles of travellers smoking under the trees by the roadside ; long streaks of reedy marsh in which grey and white wading birds are looking for worms, and over which hover and dart innumerable dragon-flies. Here, too, is the same goat we left behind us at Allahabad—standing ridiculously on its hind-legs against a tree, trying in vain to reach down with its fore-feet a tuft of leaves which you know that it, at its utmost stretch, can never reach. But the goat, though ambitious, has little perseverance, so he soon gives up his attempt, and falls to at the humbler vegetables, which, growing on the flat ground, yield themselves an easy prey. Hour slips after hour ; we are weary of pipes, and the afternoon glare reveals us to ourselves in all the grime of travel. Welcome is the long reach of shady road that leads into Moradabad, and thrice welcome the ascent to the dâk-bungalow. With soap and water returns my self-respect, and with the proud air of one born to command I order the instant death of pullets.

Who writes the *facetiae* in dâk-bungalow books ? Go where you will upwards you meet him : at Moradabad, which I take to be a typical dâk-bungalow, with khan-samah and poultry-yard as per standard plan, and bathroom doors according to pattern (and never shutting) ; at Durrial, that lonesome house where good curry abideth ;

at Kaladoongee, prettily built and cheerful, where the secret of tea is known to the cook; at Nynee Tal, with its plethora of provisions from a " sudden death" to a Strasbourg patè, from the local brew to Giesler's driest; at Ramghur, where fowls lay the eggs of finches, but develop the bones of vultures; at Pooree, where the dâk-bungalow dog, a fastidious beast, chooses to catch his fleas under strangers' beds; at Almorah, the model of dâk-bungalows, where visits you the wily vendor of Ghoorka curios, the strange man who offers you in a breath yak-tails, honey, or stuffed birds, an executioner's sword as in fashion in Nepal, or walnuts seven hundred for the rupee; at Ranee-khet, where wood—so stringent are our forest laws—cannot be bought but can be stolen without any difficulty, where grass is beyond price, but beef and mutton abound, where no fowls can be obtained but eggs are cheap; at Khyrna, where once a year fever kills off the staff, leaving only a *bhistie* to cook for travellers, and a grass-cutter to wait upon them at dinner;—at one or all of these places, we have only to look at the dâk-bungalow book to track the facetious wanderer from stage to stage. The trail of the serpent is over them all.

But I left myself just starting from Moradabad, passing through the picturesque bazaar, paying toll at the bridge of boats, and then entering a long reach of grey sand. Here it is impossible not to wonder at and admire the splendid working of the doolie-bearers. Though the heavy sand lies ankle-deep, their courtesy to each other is unbroken, their cheerfulness unchanging—now pass-

ing a joke with a friend going by, now exchanging a hearty "Ram Ram" with another party of bearers—ever alert to take up the pole in their proper series, watchful of sudden holes, and keeping up as they trot a running commentary on the road, their freight, their hookahs, or the passers-by. The coolie is a poor thing. It takes a terribly short time for the stranger to India to consider him a creature of no feelings, and of less reason. Sensitive as the young Englishman, with his grand nation's ideas of independence, may be when he first reaches Calcutta or Bombay, the sharp edges of his humanity are worn off before he reaches his station, and in a month he finds himself speaking of "coolies,"—aye, and he regrets it at times,—as the beasts of burden of the country, the *jumenta*, which for a paltry three pennies he may use for twelve hours of God's daylight for any purpose he pleases, whose insolence is resented as more intolerable than that of the dog which refuses to follow, or of the horse that jibs. These are coaxed to obedience; with a bitter word or a blow the coolie is compelled. His humanity is his curse, his poor allotment of reason the handle for his degradation. Better for him had his arms remained feet, his ears been never replicated. And yet the coolie is not unworthy of admiration. This same heroism in toil should commend itself to Englishmen; while the fine independence of the six thousand men who not long ago struck work on a Government canal, and went home without the three weeks' wages due to them, is an index of no mean natures. Their reason was that

one poor coolie among them had been treated with injustice. Tell the howling working-man of free and independent England this, and he will say "damned fools." The injured man should have gone to law in a regular way, his expenses being paid by his comrades: a petition against the ill-usage of coolies should have gone up to Council, and meanwhile there should have been a strike for only eight hours' work, and a rise of twenty-four per cent in the wages. But the up-country coolies argued differently. A brother had been insulted: were they in turn to lose their honour? Rather than this, they hungrily forewent their wages, and returned to their squalid homes. Poor fools!

And now the night is falling, the torches have been lighted, and before us lies the Terai with its miasmata and tigers. This is the fabled tract over which, as the English public believes, no bird can fly but drops half-way into the poison-breathing jungle; no beast can live except the hyæna, with whom fever agrees; the cayman which knows not ague, flying-foxes, and a hideous multitude of vipers—the anaconda, pythons, and amphisbœnas, gross spiders that overpower birds, and the Snapping Turtle. How different is it to us now! A doolie, to which sleep comes as lightly as to featherbeds, six men and a torch, an hour or two of a not uncomfortable motion, and we find ourselves with the day beginning to break beyond "the deadly Terai." And then another hour, and we turn full upon the dâk-bungalow at Kaladoongec—the pheasants calling from the

deep coverts, the first sun striking through the columned trees, a ragged tapestry of moss hanging from every bough, and the clean-clad kitmutgar bowing in gratitude for favours to come.

Up the hill. First the pleasant level, thick-shaded, along which the pony lends itself willingly to spur and whip until the stranger thinks the hills have been maligned, exaggerated ; that khuds are the unwholesome fictions of some dyspeptic spinster ; that he will canter into Nynee Tal in time for a late breakfast. Only sixteen miles—but on a sudden Dya Patta becomes a stern reality ; and the pony, an old mountaineer, refuses even an amble ; the road looks as if it never could go down hill again ; the sun finds you out on the path, and stares at you as you creep up ; and before Mangowlie is reached, your watch has told you that breakfast—let it be never so late—must be cold by this time. The khansamah there tells you that Nynee Tal is still seven miles above you ; and if it rains !—but I will not suppose it. Rather let the ride up be in that glorious month October. The clear air reveals on one side the plains spread out, a white river winding along, dark patches of forest-land, lighter ones—the land is leprous with them—of corn-fields and bare tracts, stately clouds here and there moving in dark shadows across the landscape ; on the others, east, west, and north, the Hills. Wall behind wall of living green, great ramparts of rock, grassy bastions disposed in orderly disorder, long valleys reflecting in green the clouds above them, moats filled with white mist—a grand system of muniments guarding the ap-

proaches to the snows. The path mounts upwards; on either hand a great slope of pine and oak, boulders panelled and festooned with moss and ferns, the green landscape relieved here by a mass of yellow mullen, there by the crimson leaves of the creepers in the pines.

On the sunny patches, or where a gorge suddenly opening shows a great triangle of mountain sloping down to valleys in which the trees look like shrubs, and from which rises up the pleasant sound of rushing water, flit insects of shapes and tints strange to the new-comer. Great velvet bees banded with orange and gold; the flame-coloured *Sirex* and a myriad of butterflies; *Sarpedon* on his wings reflecting in broad bars the blue of the sky above; *Polycctor* gorgeous in purple and green and gold; *Paris* with, on either wing, a great splash of sapphire; the *Gonepteryx* and *Colias* wandering sun-flashes; the *Fritillaries*, on whose under-wings lie silver sparkles caught, in flitting over, from some glittering cascade. But what a dearth of animal life: no squirrels on the boughs or hares on the hill-side. Where are the deer lying, where the monkeys hidden? Even birds are few. The slate-blue jay is heard screeching or seen hopping among the fallen leaves; the braggart parrot with his yellow tail that can never leave a tree without telling the world of it, a woodpecker or nuthatch is heard at times, or a wagtail is seen. True, there is that ubiquitous villain the crow, his vile voice viler by the sore throat he seems to have caught in the hills, and tom-tits everywhere; but

the wilderness of trees seems very desolate. Oh ! for the more beautiful forests of England, of Marlborough. There the giant beech trees, smooth-lobed and tender-foliaged, spread wide their level arms to shade the herds of dappled deer, and there shimmers the silver-stemmed larch in which the red squirrels chatter ; in the tall bracken-fern lie couched a nation of hares and rabbits ; on the white-thorn in its bridal veil, redolent with perfume, swing the black-bird and the thrush, " the throstle and the merle," fluting from morning to night ; a thousand song-birds are in every thicket and the dormice nestle in every knoll of moss. Glorious may be the mountains and forests of the East ; but there came to them after the Creator, roughly shaping as he passed, no angels with loving lady-hands to make each corner beautiful, cover each stone with moss, plant flowers in each cranny and chink, and give to every nook its tuneful bird or harmless beast.

But let no one rashly accuse me of a bigoted indifference to the beauties of the Indian Hills. Come with me to Nyneé Tal and along the level road that scars old Cheena, and from which the green lake is seen lying, pear-shaped, at the foot of the couchant hills, on which, perched one above the other, glisten the white-walled homes that we, in our insolence of muscle and Northern love of cold, have travelled so far to build. Here is the Snow Seat. Blessed benches ! Buddha himself, had he just toiled up the steep Khyrna gorge, could not have refrained from resting on your broad-barred levels :



your height with a nice discretion so adjusted, that the feet, sick of going now on heel and now on toe, can rest plantigrade, fully comfortably flat, upon the ground, the elbows leaning upon the knees, and between the open palms the head; the eyes resentful of the everlasting up-rights of the hills, the eternity of rock and tree, rest leisurely upon the distant sublimity of the Snowy Range. The Snowy Range! Hats off to the Trisool. Bow to Khamet. Down, down, with you to their queen, the Nunda Devi. Modest in her superb pre-eminence, she stands blushing—for the sun is rising—behind her more forward and less lovely sisters, the grand trinity of rock that from year to year looks full across through cloud and storm. The wretched elements may fume and froth at times; the space between the Snow Hills and the Snow Seat be filled now with dense sleet, now with denser fogs; black rain-clouds may sulk along the mountains' side, summer fleeces float about them or cluster round their brows—yet we feel that from far behind the great hills are looking full across. The rain-cloud is soon emptied, the fog has slunk away, and the summer fleeces have been melted into the ardent blue, but still there, in their places, are the great hills, sphinx-eyed, looking full across. I wonder if the native hold the snows in awe? Fair or foul the weather, from age to age, the grand chain sits there, a bench of gods keeping count of time. The desolation of the snows is terrible. Their very grandeur forbids familiarity even with Nature. Seldom does a bird visit them: few beasts

dwelt among them. Infrequent are their worshippers—and when these come, they are irreverent, soiling the imperial ermine of the saintly hills with empty bottles! Fewer still are their friends. It is true that the Clouds, and their poor relations the Mists, visit them, and are more than chance acquaintances, for they spend much time together; but the Sun they treat as an equal, flinching not to meet his bold gaze from day to day, and the Stars and Moon they hardly acknowledge.

When I first saw the snows, it was unexpectedly; I gasped out with my last mouthful of breath (for I had just walked up the hill) “*the snows.*” Then I sat down comfortably and lighted my pipe, and resting my head upon my hands I looked. And while I looked I forgot to smoke: the solemnity of those great hills crept over me, and before I had satisfied my eyes, I got up, the act was hardly voluntary, and passed down the hill. “Surely,” I said, “God lives behind those hills.”

And yet I knew there were only greasy Thibetans.

---

## DEATH, THE DAUGHTER OF MERCY.

A SHOOTING trip in the Kirwee jungles had laid me on my back, and when the long illness which followed the fever had relaxed its grip, I was weakened beyond words, and had worn out the hope of all, even of the wife to whom I had been married hardly a year. At times even I myself thought I must be dying. I was

in no pain, but was dying from the simple want of strength to live, and in my weakness a phantasm, the Angel of Death, was a terror to me.

And one day I was asleep, and into my dreams had carried with me my waking thoughts of Death.

"Why do you tremble so?" asked a gentle voice in my ear.

I turned towards the speaker, and knew at once it was Hope. She put her arm under my head, "Why do you tremble so?"

"Because," I whispered, "I am afraid of death."

"Death," spoke Hope in my ear, "is the daughter of Mercy."

"Can so cruel, so hateful a thing wear a woman's form?" I asked in surprise.

"Yes, and be most beautiful" was the soft reply. "In heaven we all love her and pity her."

"You pity death? We on earth hate death, and fight against it; I myself am terrified at death."

"Come with me," said Hope, "and you shall see and tell your friends, when you get well, why it is that we in heaven love the sad daughter of Mercy."

And so I went up with Hope on the night-wind to heaven. And as we passed along the Milky Way, the bright highroad of the sky, we saw stars below our feet, on either hand and above us, not as we see them from the earth dotted here and there, but hanging about in great clusters, and in places the clusters swung so close together, that they made a common radiance, while

round and over them floated large nebulous brightnesses made up, it seemed, of powdered stars. Yet bright above all showed the close-starred Milky Way slabbed with light. And as we flashed along, my companion began to speak.

"The Thalaba is not the most beautiful among us, but if she had only one flush of Aurora's ruddiness, or one of Charity's smiles, she would be the most lovely and the most lovable, as she is now the grandest and the saddest of us at all——"

"But you must be very beautiful," I said.

"Am I?" asked Hope, turning her face full towards me, and going on——

"On earth you have much that is beautiful in death, ordinary beauty apart from the fancy of sentiment and association. The most beautiful of your beasts are your deadly ones, and of all created things what is more splendid than the squamate anaconda, what more elegant than the viper with its silver rings? Among herbs how beautiful are the blossoms of the poison-plants, how exquisitely bright their lethal fruit! Then in the rush of a cyclone shuddering the conscious earth beneath it, the awakening of a volcano, the rage of the storm when ever and again the lightning as with a krees of flame rips up, a jagged wound, the belly of the black night releasing the resonant thunder—is there not grandeur of a gloriously beautiful kind in all this death? And in lesser things. Does not the crotalus strike to the music of its rattles?—the poisoned arrow sing on its way as it carries its mes-

sage of death? Ordinary death, too, if you could, while looking on, forget the relative or friend, would seem very beautiful. The sweet smile which Pity comes down so often to leave on dying lips, the gentle breath with which the baby sighs away its life, are very beautiful—more beautiful,” said Hope, “than I.”

And Hope I saw was not so very beautiful. It was, for an Angel, a very human face, with a woman's depth of hope and love in the eyes, it is true, but with a woman's tender weakness in the lips and smile. And just then I saw coming towards us a child-angel, a poor haggard-looking waif. Its eyes were deep sunken and despairing. And to my surprise Hope turned off to it, and caught it up in her great arms, kissed it, and put it down again. And with one sad look the little one passed on to earth. Hope, I remembered, is the mother of Disappointment.

“Am I so very beautiful?” asked Hope again.

“I had thought,” said I, “you were more beautiful,” and so we passed on into the great space beyond the stars, where only the sun is sphered—a grand void in which there is nothing not even ether.

“Look!” said Hope, “there is Death on her way up to heaven, to give in her tale to the Greater Angel.”

And I looked where Hope was pointing. It was away towards the East that, swiftly nearing the lowering floor-clouds of heaven, I saw the Angel of Death winging a wearied flight. The comparison was ignoble, but in the slow-measured beat of those great pinions, I remember-

ed how once I saw a lammergeyer on the Swiss mountains working its way up the steep sky with laboured wing, to the cranny far up the naked rock where were hid its callow young. And with the same slow sweep of the wings did Death pass up the sky, and we followed Death, and saw the great Angel enter Heaven, seating herself upon the daïs of the Archangels. And then I saw what a glorious beauty was her's, and what a weight of sorrow was enthroned upon her brow! A world of Rachels could not have expressed among them all the grief which looked from the eyes of this great being. But in the posturo of the head, the curve of the inimitable mouth, there was pride, and a pride born of the knowledge of power.

"Yet," whispered Hope, "she is not immortal. A day is coming, and she knows it, when she and her great father of the terrible arm and the child's face will have to go forth and cease upon the void of a dismantled earth."

But the Thalaba did not long remain at rest, for while I was looking with admiration, yes, and with pity, upon the Angel of Death, I saw come crowding round her all her troop of servitors, ill-favoured all of them but two. And the one of them was sweet-faced Iris, whose mission it is to whisper to the young wife that the child unborn will never live to see its mother, but that left to her still is the love of her husband. The other had a wild beauty in his eyes, and he it is who guides the hand of the suicide. First among the company stood long-bearded, mild-eyed

Time, who mows down old lives, and next beside him stood that terrible one, whose breath is pestilence and glance a plague.

"Is she not beautiful?" asked Hope, and without waiting, went on, "see the sublime outline of her full, bloodless lips! Her eyes, glorious though no soul looks out at them, are supreme in their beauty. And what a gentle face! Yet soft-cheeked she is never kissed, and soft-limbed as Love she has no lovers. But her father's great strength lodges in her full form, and pitiless, indeed, when she shuts her great eyes and her beautiful lips straighten in resolve, is the daughter of Anger."

"But was not her mother Mercy?"

"Yes," was the reply, "and often and again, as we have stood on either side a death-bed, have I seen behind those great eyes come welling up most human tears, and to snow blanch the splendid marble of her brow. Her fate is terrible and wrings her. To take the wife from the husband, the lover from the lover, the child from its mother, the idol of a nation from them, these are her awful tasks. And ever and again she revolts against High Heaven, and, flashing from her place, descends, as swift as the eye-sight of Great God, to snatch from her over-zealous messengers a baby's life, or to give back, when even I was turning from the bedside, a young wife to her husband, or an only son to his mother. And then she returns calm and impassionate to her place, and the Angel erases the last line from the Book of Fate ——"

Hope had ceased, and I knew why ; for while I was looking at the Thalaba, she had been left alone, all her messengers having left to do her biddings, and her eye was full on mine. And as she looked, there glided out from behind her a thin fleshless thing which came swiftly towards me, and taking my hand, drew me across the narrow space that had held me from death. *And Hope stayed behind.*

And as I passed on I know my fate. I felt leaving me all life, all desire to live, a helpless bewilderment of fear. At last I stood before the Angel, and as I sank out of life this sentence slipped my fluttering lips—spoken in two worlds: “ Hope told me that Death was the Daughter of Mercy.”

And as my head drooped in death, I saw a second self: it was my soul leaving me : and then I saw the Angel turn one rebel flash towards the throne of Him whom now I became aware was pervading the upper Heaven, and in a clear defiant voice I heard her throw down the challenge to God,

*“ And I AM the Daughter of Mercy ! ”*

Then I heard Hope’s fluttering robes beside me, caught the nervous laugh with which she seized my hand, —and I awoke !

\* \* \* \* \*

“ What a wonderful recovery ! ” said all my friends.

The Doctor, a young Assistant Surgeon, was a proud man. “ I thought,” he said, “ we should pull him through.”



And my little wife? As she leaned over me, I heard her saying in my ear, "If I had lost you! only mine a year and to have lost you so soon!" and I whispered something to her in reply.

"Ah," said the young Doctor pompously, "he will be delirious no doubt yet a while, but we've pulled him through this time."

But all I had whispered to my little wife was, "Ethel, she was right. Beautiful and very loving is Death, the Daughter of Mercy."

---

## RAILWAY TRAVELLING.

I KNOW that Railway travelling has charms for very few—but I am of the minority. I would travel by rail, even in the rains, from Howrah to Simla, or from Peshawur to Madras viâ Bombay—although I knew the Kistna to be unbridged, and the Beas flooded—simply for the pleasure of travelling back again. But I insist upon one condition—that I shall travel first class. This is I know considered snobbish, but then very few can agree as to what a snob is. A snob to my mind is he who travels cheaply because he thinks he proves himself a gentleman and above "false pride" by not travelling first class. There are many who consider that others travel luxuriously because they are ashamed to travel second class, but if they have ever included me among

these they were mistaken. Twice in India have I travelled second class—once as an experiment, and the other time from want of money. On those two occasions only did I find railway-travelling abominable. The seats were not broad enough to spread a comfortable bed upon: there was no net for my trifles to be out of the way in: I was allowed to oversleep myself at a station where carriages had to be changed: my fellow-passengers were not such that I could converse with them with pleasure, being on one occasion the jockeys and grooms of some of the Viceroy's guests *en route* for the Sonapore Races, on the other a Roman Catholic priest on his way to Pondicherry (he only spoke Italian) and two semi-drunken soldiers with their wives. But apart from all this, and the difference of demeanour of railway servants, &c., to a first and to a second class passenger, I consider that the absence of a bath-room alone justifies me in never travelling second class. When travelling "first" I can while away a half hour before each feeding station by making myself comfortable and clean, and when the train stops, can step out and enter the Refreshment Room, a fit companion for any ladies whom I may happen to meet. But when travelling in the shabby class, the greater part of my feeding time is spent in the waiting room, scrambling through a hot and unsatisfactory toilet, and the remaining minutes in scrambling through a cold but equally unsatisfactory meal. I like when travelling to be sure of a good light, and to be justified in rating roundly the rascalion

who comes up late to sweep my floor. If my venetians do not shut it pleases me to feel qualified to swear against the Directorate an oath of as many articulations as a centipede, and sonorous as a salutation from a Kooka.

(Once when travelling in the hills, somewhere near Ranee Khet, if my memory serves me, I found myself in a lane. The gentle incline was shaded on either side by a tall shrub—I am no botanist—with lavender flowers, but here and there the sun, setting as it can set in the hills, struck in across. Half way up was a well—just a semi-circle of moss-grown stones against a bank, from which, over a slippery cushion of greenest moss, trickled and dripped eternally a rill of crystal purity. As I came up to it a man startled me by rising from the ground, for when sitting in the shady angle of the well the grey-blue dress on the swarthy body had escaped my eye. It was a Kooka—so said my companion. May be, but he was a grand man. More than six feet high, of splendid build, and with a well-born Sikh look in the set of his head and the symmetry of his features, the “Kooka” was dressed with that indescribable grace—laugh away ye Anglo-Indians grown old among “these d——d natives,”—which is the birth-right of Orientals. On his head was a ponderous turban, blue and white, from which like coiled snakes glittered out the brightly-polished discs of steel, which these men know how to hurl with a terrible accuracy of eye and hand. And as he rose the man threw back his head, and raising his hand to his

turban rolled out a God-speed-ye, a very diapason of salutation. Anything more grand than the sonorous harmony of that Kooka's greeting I have never heard, and to this day I think of the cloistered shade of that green hill-road as sanctified, and never do I remember "the hills," but my ear is filled and startled by the sudden roll of the Kooka's voice. And this is why I said above "as sonorous as a salutation from a Kooka.")

But let me take other ground for my partiality for railway-travelling than that of material comforts. Shall I confess—I do it but for illustration's sake—that I like to travel by the cushioned class, because it pleases me to think that thereby I borrow dignity? Well, then, I do confess it.

I like the station-master to say "Sir" to me assiduously. The police at the different stations salaam to me, and I like to be salaamed to. I am neither less nor more than a man, so I like flattery. It gives me pleasure to be mistaken for a Member of Council, or a Railway Director. If such could be bought with money, I would lay out a considerable portion of my income in a false appearance, so that I might at all times simulate the style, and receive the homage, of a dignitary in the land. To be habitually mistaken for a Chief Commissioner I would revert to pointed ears. I like to be thought prosperous, for prosperity brings out my finer qualities. I am then pleased to condescend. I grow benign, and the poor have a friend in me. I set my face

against tyranny and scowl—a whole Directorate looks out angrily from my eye—at the constable whom I see misleading a native passenger by oracular speech. He catches my eye and mistakes me, doubtless, for the Agent of the Railway, I relax my frown, and for this one occasion overlook his conduct. But he reads it in my eye, he had better not let me detect him again.

In prosperity, too, I say my prayers gratefully; when happy, I am found in church o' Sundays. But in adversity, thinking that God must be forgetting me, I become a vagabond. I secrete then no human kindness, holding the world to be at odds with me, and myself the weaker of the two. I am not chastened by hard times. They irritate me to revolt. I can have no patience with misfortune. Why should I play the hypocrite and obsequiously welcome an unwelcome guest? "Get out, lean poverty," I say, "get out. You will not?—then stay." But as soon as I can I say again, "Aroint thee! thou pitiful scrag-faced atomy, thou knuckle-end. Thou has out-stayed thy welcome." And right merrily I kick the drab forth.

( But to return to our carriage. ) My only condition, as I said at starting, is that I shall travel comfortably. I must have two stout pillows, and at least two good rugs: in my courier-bag must be a well filled flask, a corpulent tobacco pouch, a change of clean pipes and fusees. None of your matches—Bryant and May, which it is a science to strike and in damp weather an impossibility, Letchford

which goes off like a cracker or the Viennese ohne-phosphor-geruch which smell consumedly—but *fusees*. And how do I spend my day? Well I cannot tell how it is, but rapid motion generates in me rapid thought. I never think so much as when in a railway train. The panorama that is passing without makes of the mind a kaleidoscope—ever shifting the arrangements of ideas. I wish I were a scribbler, one of those who must go to bed with it whenever they conceive a thought. It must be a great relief to let blood from the brain with a pen as these do. I sometimes get an idea into my head, and as I think of it, another attaches itself to it, and then another: all suddenly another side of it is presented to view, and a rush of thoughts group themselves round it on *that* side—as chalk and other alkalis conglomerate themselves round a flint nodule. In my head there is an article, an essay, but a plague on it! I cannot set it down on paper. My thoughts stand about on the foolscap like a squad of militia recruits; they are no regiment. Like separate posts of sizes they are arranged in a circle, but you cannot call it a railing. A coach and four could be driven between any two of them while no one resembles his neighbour in size or thickness. I have all the kidneys but cannot make a pudding of them: my beads will not string. What a pleasure were it when a thought walked into your head to be able to lead it out courteously on to paper, and there leave it for ever. It could never come

back to bother me, for if it offered to do so I could say "No, Sir, I have done with you—you were printed long ago. Be off, bone ! I picked you clean some months since." That thought would be done with *for ever* ! By so much the vastness of the world be diminished to me : by so much the godowns of my brain relieved. As it is I have certain thoughts which are for ever overtaking me. In the Railway they afflict me. One, for instance, is the obstinate contrariety of the native. Even in small things we are antipodes. Whatever an Englishman will do standing, a native will do sitting. The former beckons by moving his finger upwards, the other by moving it downwards. We chirrup to a horse to make it go, a native chirrups to it to make it stop. When an Englishman has been using an umbrella, he rests it against the wall handle upwards ; but a native sticks the handle in the mud. We blow our noses with our right hand, wiping them downwards ; they with their left hand, and rub their noses upwards. If we wish to put a thing down, we do so on the nearest table ; a native, if undisturbed, puts a thing down on—the ground. We write from left to right, they (most of them) from right to left : the leaves of our books turn to the left, but when we read in native books they turn to the right. In civilized places the shepherd drives his sheep before him ; here he makes one of the flock, or goes in front. Even the birds are contrary to Western nature. The robins of England have red on their breasts, in India they wear their red under

their tails. And this contrariety annoys me. I am for ever ferreting out distinctions. The above are but a moiety of those which have at different times passed under the roller of my brain-press. But the type is not inked.

Again, when travelling I cannot help wondering whether I myself in the train am not a very exact illustration of the British in India. Here am I, "an heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time," travelling in a cube of civilization, an isolated fragment of the west, at railroad speed, through a heathen and ignorant country. I have not time to speak to the natives waiting at the cross-gates. I am going too fast. If I could they would not understand or sympathize with me. So they catch only a glimpse of me: think the train very wonderful; understand nothing and keep their ignorance to themselves. A rush and a screech and the train is out of sight. The gate swings open and the ekkas jingle along again, just as they jingled along in the time of Akbar, and as if the metals were not still warm with the rush of a passing train. The people in the fields will hardly turn to look at the steam-angel. Why, in any English shire, with a train passing every two hours, the sweating labourer rests a moment with his foot upon the spade "to see the train pass," but here, with only one train a day, and that on but one line, the wretched ryot, fingering weeds, sits with his back to the train—crouched on the ground like some big batrachian, his arms straight out before him, and



his elbows resting on his knees. He pays no tribute to science.

Looking out of the window of a train is of itself to me a source of great enjoyment, and as long as my pipe holds out, I can sit, well-employed, looking out of the window of a train. It is wonderful how orderly God's world is. How, without bidding, all nature moves along in its appointed way, each creature fulfilling with all its might the purposes of its creation. Plover ! plover ! with the crescent of white across your wings, as you sweep along, you are doing God's will, and you, too, little snippet in the reeds by the puddle side. Oh hawk with the russet head—hover long and high : let your sight be keen, and in your swoop be death ! Fight ye mynas on the hillock for your dames : lurk low in the babool's shade thou hungry wolf. And you, too, oh train, speed on—though a creature of the created, you are doing the Supreme Creator's will—(Here a Baboo would now come in.)

"I am sorry Baboo—but this compartment is full. There are two of us already. You will find another empty if you try." "Thank you, Sir."

I like a Baboo somewhat—the first class classical Baboo. A rude wit has called him a 'tadpole.' Well, he is certainly like a tadpole, but now that I think of it I like tadpoles somewhat. I should like to have known the Baboo who spoke of a bastard as "a demi-official son"—or that other who when hustled by a European on a

---

railway platform turned upon him with the indignant remonstrance "Sare—is *this* your boasted English JURIS-PRUDENCE!" I think I am a Baboo myself—except in my speech,—for I am a thing of very imperfect acquirements. My tadpole tail is an unconscionable time a-dropping off. My childishness has not all gone out of me, and by so much as remains I am a fool. Especially am I a fool, in that I distress myself over small things. A pretty flower which I have never seen before makes a girl of me. I talk foolishly in the presence of the masterpieces of God. I had once been out shooting black-buck, but my luck was bad and I lay down, sulky enough, to rest under a tree. The day was lovely, and a slight breeze made the shade of the tree I lay in very pleasant. And I smoked with my face almost in the grass. Suddenly, close beneath my eye, I became aware of a little insect, a tiny fly creature, whose eyes stood out sparkling from its head like little topaz-stones—and as I watched it—*it died*. I never felt so solemn in my life. The insect fell over on its side and then sank on its back. There was a tremor in its tiny legs, one feeble attempt to rise, and then slowly, one across the other, the legs closed and stiffened, the wings were folded up, the topaz light faded from the eyes, and it was all over. The thing had died. It was really solemn—the death of that little insect in the middle of a leaf. But as I watched it a hardy-looking ruffian with a tail suggestive of a sting alighted on the leaf. It was an irreverent insect, and pounced upon the

dead. I had meant to bury the fly, but I am afraid that waspy thing ate it. And I hate interfering with wasps.

Another little thing that I remember well. It was years ago—many years ago—and I was on my way to Cashmere. Who that has travelled in a land of hills does not know that hour in the morning when he can walk over a sun-smitten hill-crest, and in a hundred steps pass into a chill night shade, and then as he ascends the slope before him as suddenly step again into a hot sun, to be succeeded again in its turn by dew and damp? It was in that hour that I had been going on my way, and the coolth (why is there not this word?)—the coolness—of the valley in which the night still lingered tempted me to sit down. And as I sat, there passed me, from behind, a strapping young mountaineer, and after him at my elbow there suddenly appeared a wee brown bairn, breathing hard, who passed on up the steep hill. Her dress was that of a mimic monk, a coarse brown cloth thrown round her and cowl-like over her head. Her feet were so sore with going, that she limped along, leaning in a pitiful way upon a poor green branch for an alpenstock. My hate for the great brute striding on a-head—he was already at the top of the hill—was fierco, and I hate him still. I watched the curious little figure creeping up painfully and had half a mind to go after her and carry her, when suddenly she was touched by the light, and like a wee saint passed out of the valley of shadows into

the sunshine glorified. And I am always glad I saw her in the sunlight last.

She would have screamed, I know, if I had touched her. One woman did, because she thought I was going to touch her. She fled shrieking from me—flinging down the baskets from her head and ran for life and virtue. (There was a Military depot close by : perhaps this explains the fat woman's terror at seeing a white man.) But I had no designs upon her—as she found when, after running a mile before me, she stopped exhausted or in despair at the foot of a steep ascent. She had made up her mind to lose her life or her virtue rather than run up that hill—but she had to do neither. When I looked back I thought she appeared just a little disappointed. But the women in the hills are curious altogether. I saw no beauty among them. It was my luck Had I hunted about for a plain woman, I should, I suppose, have chanced on a Venus. I did see one pretty girl though—a wild and rather dirty thing. She had the eyes and bearing of a deer and the skin too—for she was fawn-coloured. But her legs were columnar. However, this has not to do with railway-travelling; but—halloa!

“*Asleep!* my dear Sir, you would nod over the Doleres, snore, so believe me, over Gulliver!” Guard, what station is this?”

“Meerut, Sir.”

“Meerut—ah! *Meerut*. I'll get out here, Guard, for

---

some dinner. You need not wake this gentleman. But, guard—why do they spell Meerut at the City station with two ts—*Meerutt*—and here, at the cantonment station, with only one ?”

“ Don’t know, I’m sure, Sir. I think its all along of Dr. Hunter, Sir.”

“ You are right, guard. Dr. Hunter is even as a fire-tailed fox in our corn-fields.”



